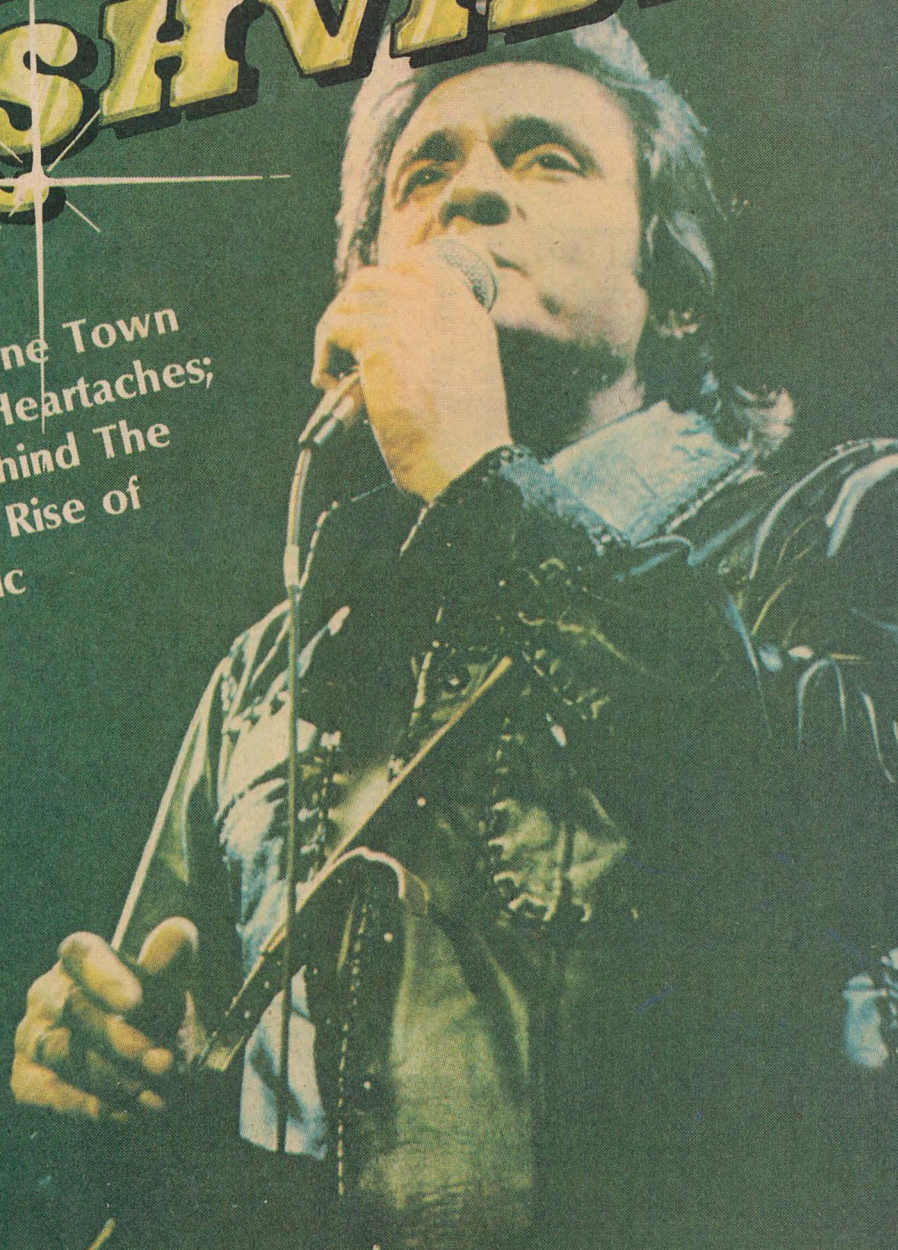


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INSIDE NASHVILLE

The Rhinestone Town
Of Hits and Heartaches;
The Story Behind The
Phenomenal Rise of
Country Music



JOHNNY CASH ROY CLARK LORETTA LYNN JAMES TALLEY
JIMMY ROGERS HANK WILLIAMS THE CARTER FAMILY
TOM T. HALL TEX RITTER • EDDIE ARNOLD AND MANY MORE



Johnny Cash Lives His Life All Over Again

By Evan Crawley

Johnny Cash set aside nine months and let his life run before his eyes. And it did. He put it all down on paper, in his own handwriting.

The result: One of the most gripping autobiographies ever written, "Man In Black."

Cash, 45, calls it a "spiritual odyssey" — not just what happened to me, but what is happening now and where I think I'm going from here."

Begun in mid-1974, the book became an obsession with the entertainer. He felt what serious authors feel when a book takes hold — it became a true extension of himself.

"Many times at night I got up, grabbed a pen and started scribbling," Cash said. "I was used to that in a way. That's the way I sometimes write songs. But this was different. This was myself coming out."

"When I got it on my mind, sleep was out of the question. I'd get up and work on it two or three hours, in the middle of the night."

THE EFFORT was worth it. "Man In Black," published by Zondervan Corp., is one of the most honest such books ever written.

"I really got to know myself," Cash said. "It was a completely psych-out experience."

"As I wrote about a specific incident,

I started remembering snatches of conversation. The more I wrote, the more I remembered."

"For instance, I described a night I spent with Charley Pride in Chicago. By the time I finished that section, I had relived every minute of that evening."

To write an honest life story entails living your life all over again. Johnny Cash spared himself nothing.

He found himself writhing in despair and shame all over again. As he transcribed the famous story of his physical and mental breakdown in Georgia several years ago — a breakdown brought on by amphetamine and barbiturate addiction.

HE FELT HIMSELF filled again

with the glory of God and the warm love of family and friends as he relived his struggle back to health and faith.

Sights and sounds long forgotten rushed back.

"There was a black club where I saw Sister Rosetta Sharpe, the Gospel singer," Cash said.

"Once again I could smell the beer, and I could feel the sunlight hurting my eyes the next morning and I could remember the headache I had the next day."

"The more I remembered, the more each memory opened up another door. I looked at myself from 1975 back to 1965 as if it was this morning."

(Continued on Page 18)

Nashville Is More Than a Town

By Tom Ayres



JIMMY ROGERS ... the man most commonly referred to as 'The Father of Country Music.'

By late afternoon the vast expanse of concrete that flanks Opryland U.S.A. just outside Nashville, Tenn., begins to fill with five-year-old cars, buses, pickup trucks and people.

In the crowded cab of one of the pickups, a family of five untangles and the children step cautiously onto the parking lot, their wide, innocent eyes darting in a vain attempt to record everything at once.

The father, who surveys the scene with equal awe, is a man of ruddy complexion with calloused hands protruding from the sleeves of an out-of-fashion suit coat that still looks new. It is obvious the coat was never meant to cover the width of his shoulders. The mother, in a new print dress, looks apprehensive. She has never seen so many people in such a hurry.

They have ridden 150 miles in the cramped cab of the truck, sitting on each other's laps. But now, they are not even aware of the stiffness in their legs. This is Saturday night. This is Nashville. This is the Grand Ole Opry. This is the pennicle of their lives.

They come from everywhere to see the Opry — from St. Louis in chartered buses, from Indianapolis, Jackson, Texarkana, Cincinnati, and yes, even New York City.

Clutching tickets that had to be purchased well in advance, they stream across the parking lots converging on the sleek modern structure that is the "homeplace" of country music.

Some rural families drive hundreds of miles every two or three months to see the "Grand Ole Opry." Others faithfully plan and make the pilgrimage once a year. Some, like the family of five in the pickup truck, make it only once in a lifetime.

The mass of humanity that converges on Opryland U.S.A. each week is not your usual show crowd. To them, the Opry comes closer to being a religious ceremony than a show. No other entertainment extravaganza can match it because the Opry is something more than an entertainment event.

MORE SPECIFICALLY, it is a cultural rallying point for a society of down home Americans who still get their hands dirty when they work. The music that echos from the walls of Opryland each Saturday night may entertain others — but it is about them. It is about their lives, their dreams,

How the Grand Ole Opry Got Its Name...

A chance remark during a radio broadcast gave the Grand Ole Opry its unique name — a name that has become synonymous with the best in country music around the world.

The radio music show destined to become the Grand Ole Opry made its debut in 1925 on Nashville Radio Station WSM as the "Barn Dance."

George D. Hay, the man who dreamed up the idea of a radio program featuring musicians from the nearby Tennessee hills, told how the name change occurred in a definitive book of recollections published years after he retired.

ODDLY ENOUGH, the name change was inspired because of Hay's friendly feud with a high-brow symphony orchestra conductor whose show preceded "Barn Dance" in 1926.

"On Saturday nights, from 7 until 8 o'clock, WSM carried 'The Music Appreciation' Hour, under the

direction of Dr. Walter Damrosch," wrote Hay.

"Dr. Damrosch always signed off his concert a minute or so before 8 o'clock, just before we hit the air with our mountain minstrels.

"We must confess that the change in pace and quality was immense, but that is part of America ... fine lace and homespun cloth, our show being covered entirely by the latter.

"The members of our radio audience who loved Dr. Damrosch and his Symphony Orchestra thought we should be shot at sunrise and did not hesitate to tell us so. Our show was about to receive a name out of the blue but we didn't know it yet.

"The monitor in our studio was turned on so that we would have a rough idea of the time that was approaching for our show. At about five minutes before eight on this particular night I called for silence

in the studio.

"OUT OF THE loud speaker came the very correct but accented voice of Dr. Damrosch and his words went something like this: 'While most artists realize that there is no place in the classics for realism, nevertheless, I am going to break one of my rules and present a composition by a young composer from Iowa who sent us his latest number which depicts the on-rush of a locomotive.'

"With that he signed off and our control operator immediately gave us the signal that indicated we were on the air.

"We paid our respects to Dr. Damrosch and said on the air something like this: 'Friends, the program which just came to a close was devoted to the classics. Dr. Damrosch told us that it was generally agreed that there is no place in the classics for realism.

However, from here on out for the next three hours we will present nothing but realism." In respectful contrast to Dr. Damrosch's presentation of the number which depicts the on-rush of the locomotive, we will call on one of our performers, Deford Bailey, with his harmonica, to give us the country version of "Pan American Blues." Whereupon, Bailey played the number.

"At the close of it, I said: 'For the past hour we have been listening to music taken largely from grand opera. But from now on we will present the grand Ole Opry.'

"The name stuck. It seemed to fit our shindig, hoedown, barn dance or ruckus," wrote Hay.

Little did Hay realize at the time that his weekly "ruckus" was destined to become a Saturday night tradition for millions of music loving Americans.

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-- For Millions It Is a Way of Life

their hopes and heartbreaks.

City folks might enjoy country music — but, country folks live it. And, the men and women who create this unique music are bigger than life, more important than astronauts and presidents, to a sizable segment of American citizens.

But, the popularity of the famed Nashville sound is not confined to the United States.

A visitor to the north side of Montreal, Quebec can stroll into the Rodeo Lounge and listen to a country and western band render "Green Grass of Home" or "Your Cheating Heart" in French.

In Tokyo, guitar strumming trubadors in ten-gallon hats will entertain you with songs like "Hey Good Lookin'" or "Wabash Cannonball" — in Japanese.

In Russia, there is a thriving black market trade in country and western records.

How did it happen?

TRYING TO ANALYZE the Nashville phenomenon is a dubious venture. However, there is one certainty that Nashvillers themselves are quick to point out. The true story of Nashville and its music is not to be found in a current movie that bears the name of their town.

To quote Billy Sherrill, Nashville's top record producer: "When you show the anatomy of a man, you should try to show something besides his tail. That's what they did in that movie."

The origins of the music that has come to be known as country and western — and the sound that made Nashville "Music City U.S.A." — have their roots in the tiny mountain hamlets of Eastern Europe, the moors of Scotland and the tiny villages beside the craggy coast of Ireland.

The poetry first set to music by the people of those regions became the folk ballads of America's frontier. The rough hewn walls of a lot of frontier taverns rang with the strains of Irish tunes for many generations before Jimmy Rodgers loosed his first yodel.

But, to state that country and western stemmed from folk music from across the Atlantic would be a gross simplification.

IN KEEPING WITH the spirit of frontier independence, Americans began changing the lyrics of old Irish

and Scottish ballads to describe their own surroundings. They would simply change the words and retain the tune.

But, there were other influences that molded the style of the country music we know today.

The dulcimer players of Appalachia made their contribution as did the fiddlers of Tennessee, the bluegrass boys of Kentucky, the hymn singers of Mississippi and the westerners with their rowdy square dance style.

The impact of music produced by America's black musicians can be found in country and western songs. The music produced by the singing cowboy became a part of the evolution. And, to the absolute horror of country and western purists, even some elements of pop rock sneaked into the product.

The man who brought many of these elements together for the first time to eventually bridge the gap between frontier folk and commercial 20th century country music has been obscured by the giants of the industry who followed in his footsteps.

HIS NAME WAS Marion T. Slaughter. He died in obscurity and is remembered today by only the most knowledgeable country and western buffs.

There are a number of reasons why Slaughter never received proper recognition for his contributions to country and western music. One reason is because he recorded songs under an incredible 110 different names. A second reason: He once was a bonafide opera singer and not too many country fans are willing to admit that a classical musician could contribute anything to country music. Finally, many of the songs Slaughter recorded were not of the country variety.

But, Slaughter did contribute.

And, he undoubtedly was one of the most remarkable musical geniuses of the 20th century.

Born in 1883, he was trained in opera. But, being a temperamental individual, he had difficulty getting along with the operatic crowd.

While still in his 20s, he began recording popular songs at an amazing rate. Many years later, they would become recognized as country classics.

During an approximate 20-year period, ending in 1928, Slaughter sold more than 25 million records under his 110 names. The name he used most



HANK WILLIAMS ... his songs probably did more to bring Country and Western music to the ears of America than any other man since Jimmy Rodgers

frequently, and the one country music buffs usually recognize, was Vernon Dalhart.

He recorded more than 800 songs, including such classics as "The Wreck of Old 97," "The Prisoner's Song," and "The Death of Floyd Collins."

AFTER 1928, Slaughter's career began to wane. He died in 1948, just two days after making a comeback attempt by recording "Blue Yodel," a takeoff on a song made popular by Jimmy Rodgers.

But, during his unusual career, Slaughter, alias Vernon Dalhart, accomplished something no other country

performer had achieved. He sold "country" records outside the southern U.S. He took country music to the north and first made it popular outside the United States.

Walter D. Haden, a professor at the University of Tennessee who researched the Slaughter story, is awed by Slaughter's worldwide influence.

"To my amazement, I have found Vernon Dalhart record collections in Bombay, India, Holland, New Zealand and Australia," says Haden.

The Slaughter influence also manifested itself in the style and presence of a young singer from Meridian, Miss., who was destined to become a legend.

His name was Jimmy Rodgers, and in Nashville, they call him "The Father of Country Music."

Rodgers worked as a railroad brakeman until he discovered that people would pay money to hear him sing and yodel.

BILLING HIMSELF as "The Singing Brakeman," Rodgers recorded his first song in 1927 — "The Soldier's Sweetheart." By 1933, at age 36, he was dead of tuberculosis. But, during those six years, he wrote a success story unparalleled in country and western music.

Rodgers recorded 111 songs and virtually every one of them was a hit. Among them were such classics as "I'm in the Jailhouse Now," "T For Texas," "Mule Skinner Blues," "Peach Picking Time in Georgia," and "Mean Mama Blues."

His songs were about life, work and the heartbreak one feels when love goes wrong — all of the ingredients that go into today's country and western songs.

When the Country Music Hall of Fame was established in Nashville, Jimmy Rodgers was the first name to be selected for membership.

To an even greater extent than Slaughter before him, Rodgers helped popularize country music in areas of the country outside the Southern United States.

Continued on page 16



THE GRAND OLE OPRY left the confines of Nashville during World War II to entertain American troops.

The Carters ... First Family of Country and Western Music

More than 48 years ago, a 36-year-old Virginia man, his wife and cousin journeyed to Bristol, Tenn., in response to a newspaper ad asking for country musicians to come and audition.

On Aug. 1, 1927, they played for a talent scout from Victor Records — and the modern era of country music was born.

The trio was the Carter Family — Alvin Pleasant (A.P.) Carter, his wife Sara and his cousin Maybelle Carter.

The recording company scout who had placed the ad, Ralph S. Peer, realized he had hit pay dirt when the Carters sat down to sing and play.

He had convinced his company there was potential gold in true country music, which so far had gone unrecorded in the 30-odd year history of the record industry.

He was right — and it was only a few months until the entire nation finally began to hear the music that country and mountain people had been playing for themselves since the nation was settled.

A.P. CARTER was born in 1891 in Scott County, Va. From his earliest childhood he heard the religious and folk songs of his mountain neighbors.

His was a strict Christian environment. When, as a youth, he expressed interest in fiddle music, his elders put their collective feet down: The fiddle, they said, was the "instrument of the devil," and had no place in good music.

Not until he was a young man, making his own money selling fruit trees to farmers, was he able to buy the fiddle he always had wanted.

On a trip to Copper Creek, Va., in 1915 he met a pretty 17-year-old girl named Sara Dougherty who shared his interest in music. They were married on June 18 of that year and returned to A.P.'s hometown of Maces Spring to begin their life together.

The Carters soon had the liveliest house in town, full of rousing good music. Folks dropped by to hear the young couple sing, and to join in with their own voices and instruments.

IN THE MID-1920s, the two Carters were joined by Maybelle, 17, a cousin of Sara who had married A.P.'s brother Ezra.

Maybelle brought to the little group an exceptional talent for the autoharp, banjo and guitar.

The trio worked up a huge repertoire of old mountain tunes, and polished their sound by a continuous round of performances at church socials, family reunions and school functions.

By the time they appeared in an improvised recording studio in a Bristol, Tenn., warehouse in response to Ralph Peer's ad, they were a solidly professional group unspoiled by the slick commercial sounds of Broadway, vaudeville musicians and jazz dance bands.

Peer — who later formed his own music publishing company — was greatly impressed by the Carter Family.

Before the session was over the next day, the Carters had cut six sides for release by Victor: "Bury Me Under The Weeping Willow," "Little Log Cabin By The Sea," "Poor Orphan Child," "The Storms Are On The Ocean," "Single Girls, Married Girls," and "Wandering Boy."

That first week in August 1927 marked more than the emergence of the Carter Family into the national recording field. For the day after they left Bristol, a skinny ex-railroader named Jimmy Rodgers also came to town in response to Peer's ad.



Carrying on the tradition and the name, the Carter Sisters perform on the road with the Johnny Cash show. Although the original Carter family recorded their last songs in 1943, Maybelle Carter and her daughters — June, Anita and Helen — have joined forces to keep the Carter legend alive. Maybelle, now 66, was once officially proclaimed 'Mother of Country Music' by the Music City News.

RODGERS, WHO in six short years before his tragic death from tuberculosis in 1933 became known as "the father of country music," also cut his first records for Peer in Bristol.

Between the Carters and Rodgers, country music as a major cultural movement and as big business was born.

They represented two distinct strains of influences. The Carter sound featured traditional songs, high, clean vocals and traditional instruments. Rodgers was influenced by popular music of the day as well as Negro Blues.

The Carter Family's records sold so well that Victor brought them back for more sessions, again and again. Later they recorded for Columbia and Decca.

All through the Depression, the Carter Family toured, mostly throughout the upper South, playing to huge crowds who scraped up 15 to 25 cents a head for admission.

A.P. Carter hit on a stroke of business genius which made his family financially secure. He copyrighted many of the traditional old songs, some of which were centuries old.

CARTER IS LISTED as composer on most of the songs recorded by the Carter Family. Some of them he no doubt wrote, but others had been around much longer than he.

No matter, the Carter Family adapted much traditional material but added so much of their own to any given song that it was hard to tell what was original and what was ages old.

Not long after the Carter Family became famous, they were followed in the country field by hundreds of others. By the early 1930s, country music was a familiar sound in the nation's radios.

The strain of constant touring wrecked the marriage of A.P. and Sara Carter. They were divorced in 1938.

Meanwhile, Maybelle Carter had given birth to three daughters, June, Anita and Helen. The girls started singing with their mother as children, becoming known as the Carter Sisters.

The original Carter Family cut their last records in 1943. But the group lives on today, once again known as the Carter Family.

A.P. Carter died in 1960. Maybelle is still performing with the group at age 66.

JUNE CARTER married singer

Johnny Cash. She and her sisters still perform on the road with the Johnny Cash Show.

In 1966, the publication Music City News officially named Maybelle Carter as "Mother of Country Music."

From a sound heard only in backwoods communities 50 years ago, country music now is played and heard all over the world.

And The Carter Family, which started it all, still is going strong.



Probably the most famous, or most recognizable of the Carters today is June, who married Country and Western star Johnny Cash.

*'I'm real inside...
What I wear outside
--my wigs and flashy
clothes--has nothing
to do with the
way I am...I'm
a totally different
person from the
way I look.'*

Dolly Parton, Thank You, Can Make It On Her Own

By Evan Crawley

Country music fans who may have gotten the idea that Dolly Parton is a pleasant, well-built simpleton who hitched a ride to fame on the coat-tails of her long-time associate, Porter Wagoner, have a new think coming.

Dolly, 29, is on her own now — and is doing better than ever.

Waves rocked Nashville last year when Dolly and Porter announced they were ending their seven-year teamup.

Thanks to the nationally televised Porter Wagoner Show, the pair had come to be thought of as inseparable. They had done thousands of shows, live and televised, together. They had shared many a best-selling record album.

There were all sorts of rumors about the reasons behind the breakup, just as there were rumors about the true quality of their relationship.

But both Dolly and Wagoner have kept a closed-mouth policy, so little can be pinned down.

BUT THERE IS NO doubt that part of the reason was that Dolly felt herself to be talented enough so that she no longer had to exist in Wagoner's shadow.

Those who thought she was an unpractical dreamer have been proved mistaken.

Today, the pretty blonde with the outlandish wigs and the spectacular figure is her own boss with her own band. Her office in Nashville adjoins Wagoner's, but their only association these days is in duet albums, which they plan to continue because they remain so popular.

Wagoner also produces her solo recording efforts, but otherwise has no

connection with her career.

Few who have seen Dolly on TV or in person on stage realize that she is a hard-driving perfectionist who kept a yen for independence buried within herself for years.

"I've always pretty well done things my own way as far as my personality is concerned," she said.

"BUT NOW I WANT to do things more my way than I have in the past. I was proud to be a part of the Porter Wagoner organization, but this gives me a chance to prove myself and carry on in my own way."

"This gives me a chance to do some things that I wouldn't have felt were fair for me to suggest in his show just because I felt they would be better for me."

When a performer severs a partnership and goes on her own, there is a great deal of re-organization to do.

Dolly needed a new band, for instance. She quickly found one in her own family. Her brother Randy fronts the group and plays bass. Two cousins, Dwight Puckett and Sidney Spiva, play drums and steel guitar. The only outsider is Bill Rehrig. Dolly's uncle, Lewis Owens, is her road manager.

"I didn't use my kinfolks because they are kinfolks," she said. "I used them because I thought they were the best I could find."

Dolly Parton began writing songs before she started to school in her home town of Locust Ridge, Tenn.

"My writing is more personal to me than anything," she said. "And to think that somebody would really take the time to listen — well..."

SHE PAUSED, and continued: "I'm

saying a lot more in my songs than a lot of people may know. I've really got deep feelings inside of them."

Dolly is a bit insistent and defensive when she talks about herself as an artist and, in recent days, as a businesswoman.

This may be because she is acutely aware that her fame, up to the time she split from Porter Wagoner, was based as much on her voluptuous looks as much as her talent.

She may be secretly kicking herself that she permitted the image of a dizzy blonde, country-style, to be projected to millions of fans when in fact there was a much more real Dolly Parton that no one knew existed.

"I'm real inside," she said. **"What I wear on the outside (her famous out-sized wigs and flashy outfits) has nothing to do with the way I am."**

"I'm a totally different person from the way I look. I really am."

"The reason I like my hair and pretty clothes is that they are something I never had as a kid. Do you know the way the hippies look today? Well, that's the way I HAD to dress when I was a kid because there was nothing better.

"I always thought that when I grew up I was going to have pretty clothes and pretty jewelry and pretty makeup and pretty hair-dos. I wanted to know what they felt like.

"So now, the young folks have gone back to what I have already been through. That laces us together. I've been there. I know what it feels like to live down to earth — to be earth people. I still am, inside."

DOLLY IS DETERMINED to have it her way. She wants everyone to know that she has her own reasons for her

appearance that have little to do with her status as an artist, and she will not change even at the risk of hampering her career.

At last year's Country Music Association awards show, Dolly was scheduled to be on the program. Some higher-up suggested that she tone down her appearance by wearing a smaller blonde wig.

"I said no, I wouldn't wear less hair because if I couldn't be comfortable, then I wouldn't be on the show. I'm not selling anything but my talent, and I'm wearing what I please."

Underneath the huge wigs without which she is never seen exists a thick thatch of blonde hair barely distinguishable from the fake locks.

"My own hair is blonde and long," she confided. "When I fix my own hair, I do it the same as the wigs look."

"I wear them because I don't like to sit for long hours under a hair dryer and I don't like to spend all day primping. This way, I can be ready to go on stage or in front of the cameras in 30 minutes."

DOLLY HAS DRIVEN herself so hard toward success that she has, from time to time, overstrained her voice.

"I've had nodes on my vocal cords for more than a year," she said. "I've had to give them a rest. I've had to stop working for several weeks at a time."

"I've been told that if I don't take better care of my voice, I could develop a really serious problem."

"It really hit me last year at a bad time, when I was forming my own organization. But if I hadn't listened to the doctors, there might not be any Dolly Parton voice, so I was obliged to lay off for a time."



TOM T. HALL ANSWERS NASHVILLE'S CRITICS

'The False Image of Our Music Is Changing ...Changing In a Very Healthy Manner'

Tom T. Hall — a country music songwriter-singer with an uncommon talent for weaving common words into profound meaning — has been bitten by the "Sneaky Snake" of misunderstanding.

Much like the surprise attacks by the rascally reptile made famous in the 39-year-old writer's recent hit song, a seemingly harmless interview granted by Hall boomeranged into controversy.

A national weekly newspaper picked up portions of the interview and fashioned the headline: "Tom T. Hall Says Country-Western Music Stinks!"

Though Hall insists the publication never contacted him for confirmation, the national weekly quoted Hall as follows:

"Country music is ignorance, picking your nose, illiteracy, honky tonk, broken bones and something dumb — like dying of appendicitis.

"I believe country-western music is losing its identity to the more 'pop' singing styles and — to me — that's just great."

THOSE COMMENTS hit the country-music world like a nuclear form of white lightning.

Hall's army of fans began wondering if their general was turning out to be an ungrateful slob.

A former Kentucky poor boy grown wealthy and famous through country music, Hall has written a long string of super hits beginning with Jeannie C. Riley's "Harper Valley P.T.A."

One of his latest recordings, "I Love," was a million seller.

AFTER WRITING "I Love," was Hall actually following up by declaring "I hate country music?"

"Hell no, I didn't say that," he told TATTLER in an exclusive interview. "And I could have told them (the national weekly) what I really feel ... if they had taken the time to call me."

Hall's voice seemed tinged with an odd mixture of pain and power.

He sounded like a man who had grown very weary and hurt from fighting what he considers poisonous half-truths.

BUT HE ALSO sounded too strong — and too proud — to permit anyone to beat him with a stacked deck.

"As for country music being ignorance, picking your nose, etc.," continued Hall, "I was saying that it once suffered from that IMAGE — that a lot of people used to think of country music in that negative way.

"But that false image of our music is rapidly changing, changing in a very healthy manner.

"Like, when I go somewhere — to do a network TV show, a club date in Las Vegas, whatever — people don't roll out a bale of hay and a pitchfork and put a straw hat on you just because you sing country music.

"So, when I say I'm glad country music is losing its image, I don't mean the music itself, but rather the image people had of it for years."

HALL PAUSED. The weariness in his voice was giving way to enthusiasm.

"When I was getting started in this business, people would say things like, 'If you're a country music entertainer, how come you're wearing shoes?' or 'Where's your coonskin cap and long rifle?'"

"In fact, when I was a 15-year-old kid starting out, there were a lot of places where you just couldn't get a job because that coonskin cap-long rifle image colored the opinions a great many people had about country music. See what I mean?"

"But through the efforts of the Country Music Association — through

the efforts of a lot of organizations and a lot of radio stations and a lot of individuals — the you've-got-to-be-stupid-to-play-it connotation of country music is dying.

Hall continued:

"When I was a youngster, most of the kids were into pop or rock or jazz. They didn't think much of country music. Now, millions of young people like what we're doing — they're tuning in to us.

"THERE'S NO WAY I'd say country music stinks. It's a very good type of music. It always has been. But it's changing much for the better. Country music is saying more. It's pickin' and singin', but it's into new sounds, new writing, new presentation. And I like it.

"You know, in time, performers like Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson and myself — all of us — will be oldtimers.

"What we're doing now is new and fresh, but the point I'm trying to make is this: when the country performers of the future have taken out music and improved on it and changed it, a lot of people will say, 'Well, I like the old-time country music like Tom T. Hall and

to turn to."

In one of his most acclaimed pieces of writing — a song that touched the hearts of college professors and truck drivers — Hall related how an old black man told him about his favorite things in life.

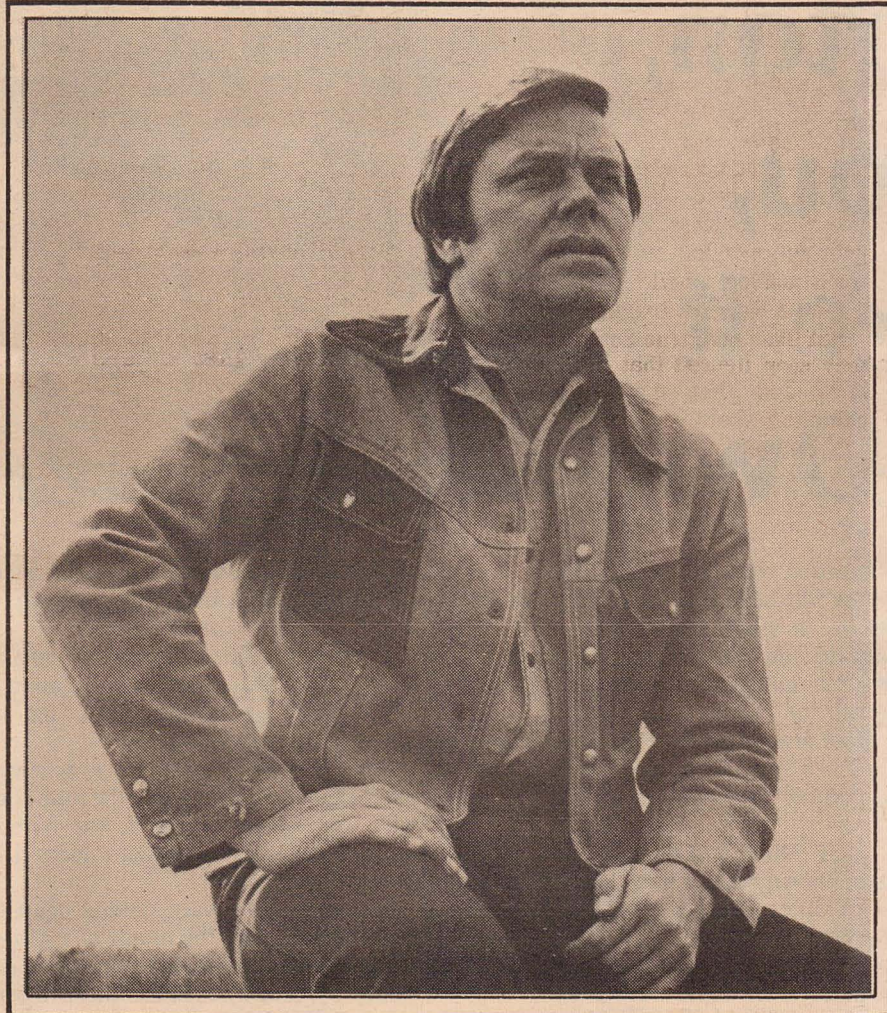
THE SONG: "Watermelon Wine." The old black man's favorite things in life: "old dogs, 'cause they care about you ... even when you make mistakes; little children, 'cause they haven't learned to hate; and watermelon wine."

Like the elderly gentlemen in the song, Hall also has a personal list of philosophical priorities: fishing, reading good books, friends. More than anything, friends.

"Friends are terribly important to me," he said. "I try not to lose them. I haven't, I don't think, lost any good friends.

Hall paused, then added softly: "I'm a good friend."

"Once in a while," he continued, "an old friend will call me, you know, to pry him out of a car wreck, or bail him out of a poker game ... whatever.



Waylon Jennings and Willie Nelson.

"Just like everything else in life, country music has to change. See what I mean?"

Having made his fight to clarify his views regarding country music, Hall was ready to talk about other important aspects of his life — like surviving the pressures of enormous success.

"YOU KNOW," he continued, "I heard a fellow say once that 'enough is a little bit more.' That really impressed me. See, I think if an entertainer's got other things — things besides his career-going for him, I don't believe that entertainer really knows when he's successful.

"What I'm trying to say is that when the lights go out on the stage, I don't want to be ... to spend my life in darkness.

"I want to have other avenues — a life besides being an entertainer. I think it's just too dangerous to totally wrap yourself up in your work, because if people become disinterested in what you're doing, then you won't have a life for yourself. You won't have anything

"WHEN THOSE things happen — and they usually happen at three o'clock in the morning — I say to myself, 'Look, now's the time to be a friend.'

"You don't need friends when you're sitting on your front porch drinking mint juleps. You need them when you have to get bailed out of a poker game, or taken to the hospital, or something like that.

"See, I try to remember that people are not going to call me asking for help when everything is beautiful."

Hall sighed.

"I get criticized a lot by some well-intentioned folks, you know? They'll say to me, 'I don't understand why you mess with that guy who's always in trouble.' And I say, 'Well, he wouldn't call me unless he was in trouble — especially at three o'clock in the morning.'

"People have said to me, 'Why do you want to mess with that old fella? You're Tom T. Hall, you're a success.'

"I GUESS SOME people feel that since I've got X amount of dollars more now than I used to have, I shouldn't hold

on to the same friends — that I should ... I don't know ... shop around and find some new friends.

"But I just don't go along with that kind of thinking. I believe it's hanging on to the things that matter — like fishing, and reading, and old friends — that pulls a guy through in life."

As he spoke to TATTLER, Hall sat in a redboard, ramshackle, barn-office building he has built at one end of the 58 acres he owns outside of Nashville.

Up on a hill is his home, a two-story mansion filled with antiques and the pleasant company of his wife.

The mansion is a blazing symbol of his financial success. The barn is a symbol of his artistic success.

It's in the barn that the former Kentucky poor boy does his "pickin', singin' and writin'."

TOM T. HALL'S "writin'" has been hailed by many people — including some eminent academics — as superb American literature.

An ardent reader of Hemingway and Sinclair Lewis, Hall is self-educated.

"What did Mark Twain say about that?" he asked rhetorically. "Twain said, 'I self-educated my ownself.'"

Most of Hall's countrified masterpieces contain nuggets of irony and symbolism. So does his life: In a very real sense, his creative output is being thwarted by a hey-aren't-you-Tom-T.-Hall? recognition factor.

Along with his network television appearances and continual personal tours, he is seen almost daily by millions of Americans as "the man selling those Chevrolet trucks on TV."

"YOU KNOW, there was a time I could go out and get in my old convertible — or just go hitchhiking — and just for a song, look for material," he said.

"But now, even though people don't always know who I am, they look at me and say, 'I know that fella from someplace.' The first thing you know, they're asking me questions. They're suspicious, you see, because they think they've seen your face somewhere.

"Sometimes they think you're a relative. Other times they think you're an undercover cop. They just know they've seen the face but they don't know where they've seen it."

Hall laughed. There was irony in the laugh.

"Once I hitchhiked to Chicago and back, hanging around there in some of the old cheap bars and whatnot, looking for a song.

"BUT, ON THE way to Chicago, a truck driver would see me and pick me up and say, 'Ain't you Tom T. Hall? What's the matter — your fancy bus break down or somethin'?"

"So, it was all ... I don't know ... kind of lost.

"In a way, my greatest asset — or maybe my best talent — was partially destroyed by my success. See what I mean?"

It's an unusual battle. Here is Tom T. Hall — still young and in his natural prime — fighting for survival against success.

After talking with the man, you get the feeling he'll win his fight. You get the feeling he'll find a way. Find a few more pieces of great writin'.

AND IF HE loses, if his fame blows town, you figure he'll have the mansion and the barn and the money.

And if he somehow loses those things, he'll still have his friends. He's a man who deserves to have friends. And they will always be there — even at three o'clock in the morning.

LORETTA LYNN:

From Bologna and Cheese Sandwiches To the Top of the Heap in Nashville

By Rick Lanning

Loretta Lynn may be the most successful female vocalist in country-and-western music, but she also is irrepressible, irresistible — and sometimes unbelievable, too.

"My doctor told me when I was 14 and four months pregnant that I was going to have a baby," she declared. "I told him: 'No, I ain't.'"

"He insisted I was and said I was married and slept with my husband, and I said: 'Yep.' And he said: 'Well, Loretta, you're pregnant. You're going to have a baby.'"

"I said: 'Doctor, that's impossible. My daddy told me he just turned over a cabbage leaf and found me.'"

She and the physician both had a good laugh.

In slightly more than ten years, Loretta Lynn, the coal miner's daughter, has shot from poverty in a log cabin and early motherhood to the top of the musical hit parade.

WHEREVER SHE GOES in her \$200,000 customized silver bus, she packs fans in. And when she releases a single or an album, it is sure to be a top seller.

But Loretta nearly did not survive her first days on earth.

Three times in Butcher Hollow, Ky., her hometown, doctors almost gave her up for dead.

Young Loretta suffered from mastoids behind the ears. She cried violently when a doctor shaved her head and drilled small holes in her skull to drain the fluid on her brain.

The life was hard in remote Johnson County.

"Daddy would go out to the mine in the evening," the Queen of Country Music remembered. "There were eight of us kids, and Mama would read to us by a kerosene lamp and wait."

"Every time, she told me she wondered if he'd be coming back."

Miss Lynn remembers walking near the mines after a disaster and hearing grieving mothers and children cry.

They are haunting, awful memories.

She met her husband Mooney after baking a cake for a church social and accidentally substituting salt for sugar.

"He tried to kiss me after the social was over, so I guess it wasn't too bad," Loretta grinned. They married only weeks before she turned 14.

BUT THE YEARS have been extremely kind to the couple. They are blessed with six children and comprise a close, loving family. They live on a large farm in Hurricane Mills, Tenn., a town Loretta totally owns.

They also keep a home in Mexico and operate several businesses, including dress shops and a talent agency she shares with Conway Twitty.

Miss Lynn is especially proud of her Tennessee estate, a replica of a Civil War mansion, which she claims "is the prettiest thing I ever saw — prettier than Tara in 'Gone With the Wind.'"

"It's in Hurricane Mills, which is near the greatest city in the world — Nashville. It has 18 rooms and a cellar that was once used to hold slaves."

"Nineteen men were killed on the grounds during the Civil War."

The Lynns operate a dude ranch on their 3,600-acre spread. Until recently, they held one of the most successful rodeos in the nation.

COWBOY PERFORMERS fondly recall the Lynns' stock and have only praise for the professional way Loretta and Mooney ran the show.

While she does not claim to be a saint, Loretta attends church regularly with her kin. She was deeply upset when a women's magazine quoted her as using a certain four-letter word.

"I never used that word in my life,"

she said. "I know bad language, but I don't use it. It burns me up when the press tries to make it look like all show business people use four-letter words, take narcotics and sleep around, with a lover behind every stage."

Loretta's first record, "Honky Tonk Girl," which she wrote, became a big hit, but it took a great deal of work to do it.

She and Mooney hit the road in a battered coupe and submitted to late-night interviews on all-night radio stations to get the song played. Her burning ambition was to perform at the Grand Ole Opry.

"I knew the Opry was the key to success," Loretta said. "And I knew I was going to be on it — fast."

The couple slept in the car and ate candy bars and sandwiches. To this day, Loretta hates bologna and cheese.

WHEN SHE PREDICTED to one interviewer that the Opry was only three months away, the disc jockey laughed. Off the air, they made a bet, and Loretta was to collect.

For her appearances on Nashville's most popular and most famous show, the young singer received \$15 per performance. She quickly became a regular about the same time she met the late singer Patsy Cline, the woman who would become her advisor and closest friend.

"In those days, Patsy's husband, Charlie Dick, and Mooney loved to take a drink," Loretta recalled with a smile. "So while Patsy and I were busting our guts out working on our music, they were sharing a bottle."

"Lord, how we fought about that!"

But like good, true Southern women, they soon figured that boys would be boys and that the wildness they exhibited would work itself out.

Eventually, the drinking stopped and peace returned to the two households.

Each time Loretta speaks of Patsy Cline, she has a far-away look in her eye.

"Patsy was so much farther advanced in country music than the rest of us that I often wonder what she'd be singing if she were alive today," her friend said.

"**I'M SURE OF ONE** thing: She'd be on top, not me, if she had lived. That spot of Country Female Vocalist of the Year was reserved strictly for her."

Loretta was scheduled to be at Patsy's side the night the latter's plane crashed and she was killed near Camden, Tenn.

"She wanted me to go with her when she and Hawkshaw Hawkins, along with Cowboy Copas and her manager, Randy Hughes, took off," the singer recalled.

"I had a small gig at a club near Nashville and told her to go ahead, that I'd see her the following day."

It rained that night. Loretta remembers eerie sounds.

"The wind was blowing with almost a musical sound," she said. "It was a sound I hadn't heard since I was a child. In a way, it was beautiful. But at the same time, it scared me."

PATSY WAS TO pick up Loretta at 9 a.m. the next day to go shopping. A few minutes past 9, her telephone rang. It was a booking agent to deliver the bad news.

"Patsy is dead" was all he said.

The telephone fell from Loretta's hand. "A part of me died just then," she recalled. She fought back tears before continuing.

"Patsy was like a sister to me," she said. "She taught me how to dress, what to say, even how to live. She always told me to keep my word, no matter what it cost."

"To me, she was the most beautiful person in the world."



Loretta Lynn, country music entertainer of the year, on stage at Veterans Memorial Coliseum in Phoenix, Ariz.



Top Country-Western Star Jim Ed Brown Says... 'We Owe Our Public the Best Show We Can Give Them'

By Vernell Hackett

To be a top country-western entertainer, you need two things: To be morally strong and not to get a big head about being a rich famous star.

So says Jim Ed Brown, a top entertainer himself and co-host of the new hit TV series, "Nashville On The Road," now appearing on 72 stations nationwide.

In an exclusive interview with TATTLER, Brown said that country music was born of simplicity and the best performers of it remain close to the roots from which they sprang.

"My own goals are not monetary," he said, "nor anything a person can see in the physical sense.

"They are goals of a spiritual nature, goals that a person can feel he has reached just by the very nature of his manner when he's around.

"I'm not the type of person who wants to make a few million dollars. Not that I crave poverty, but my financial aims are in there mixed with all my other goals."

Brown stressed that the complete entertainer not only should appear morally clean, but actually be so.

"I think he always should keep in mind that he owes to his public the best show he can do," he said.

"That doesn't allow many crutches nor excuses. I don't think people should walk out on stage with any kind of crutch, like alcohol or pills.

"I THINK AN entertainer owes to the young people coming into the business every opportunity he can give them.

"For instance, Ernest Tubb is, I think, a great entertainer because he has helped many people in the music business. He always has time for the new people, who want to make it in country music.

"Ernest always has advice for them. He always tries his best to help in any way."

Brown said he deplores country musicians who have developed such big heads that they walk on stage, sing their stuff and leave without otherwise communicating with their fans.

"I think the entertainer owes the public a well-rounded show," he said. "I think he should be able to entertain, not just walk on stage and sing his hit records and not be able to say anything.



'God has been good to me. I'm still healthy, and still can get out and work and make a living doing what I love the most--country music.'

"Some people do that — sing their records and get by.

Brown draws a fine line between the complete entertainer, who gives not just his talent but himself, and the mere performer, who may be a big name but who cheats himself and others because he does only what he has to do.

There is also a distinction between the complete entertainer and the recording artist, Brown said. The latter is good but the former is best.

"Some people have, over a period of time, had enough hit records to be able to walk on stage and sing his hits, yet be able to be the complete entertainer as well," Brown told TATTLER.

"For instance, Johnny Cash is a very well-rounded entertainer. He has recorded many different types of material and many different kinds of songs.

"He can walk on a stage, and depending on the way he feels and how he wants to do it, can thoroughly entertain people of any group.

"He's proved this by appearing before the President at the White House, and by taking his show to the prisons."

IN THE COUNTRY music field, and no doubt other fields of entertainment as well, superstardom is more than the

sum of any personal talent.

"It also involves how you conduct yourself, how you meet people, how willing you are to talk to people, etc.," Brown said.

"I know some people in our business who won't even sign autographs after their shows. And I think that's bad. They pull in there just in time to go on, walk on stage and do their thing, and immediately afterward they are in their bus and gone.

"THEY NEVER SEE their audience. They have no idea what kind of people are out there. It's too bad. I think that everyone in the business owes more than just records and an indifferent public appearance to the people who pay to hear and see them."

"To be a success at it, takes an awful lot of work, a lot of sacrifice, and you don't get to do the things you really want to do most of the time.

"You have to say, 'This is what I really want to do most and I'm not going to be able to do some of the other things I enjoy.'"

Brown, who co-hosts "Nashville On The Road" with Jerry Clower, said he is not nearly so big an artist-entertainer as he wants to be.

But, he added, as he looks back over his career he really would not wish to change anything.

"I wish I could do more," he told TATTLER, "but in looking back on my life I would not change it. Right now I have a beautiful wife, and two lovely children.

"GOD'S BEEN GOOD to me. I'm still healthy, and still can get out and work and make a living doing what I love the most — country music."

The television show, still in its infancy, may turn out to be the medium which makes Jim Ed Brown the No. 1 entertainer he wants to be.

Early guests have included Jerry Reed, Diana Trask, Mickey Gilley, Billy (Crash) Craddock, T.J. Sheppard and 12-year-old banjo picker Wendy Holcombe.

Brown has nothing but praise for his co-host, Clower.

"He's really great, a very sincere person, the type of man who can take life and make it humorous. It makes you feel good inside to be around a person like that," Brown said.



Jim Ed Brown takes 'Nashville on the Road.' The show is now appearing on 72 stations, nationwide and Brown attributes the success to his formula that making it big comes only from hard work' and a lot of sacrifice.'

After 20 Years, Freddy Fender's Luck Has Changed... 'The Man Upstairs Finally Rolled a Seven for Me'

By Paul Reining

Until he smiles, Freddy Fender looks vaguely dangerous in a Pancho Villa sort of way, with a dark mustache and a face that has seen its share of hard times.

But these days Fender has good reason to grin. His "Before the Next Teardrop Falls" and the revived "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights" are enormous national hits on both country and rock charts, and he has become an overnight success after 20 years of struggling.

Fender can look back and smile simply for having survived. There were times during his years of singing in tough clubs and bars in Texas that he contemplated hanging up his guitar in disappointment. He has served time for an offense that today even the nation's First Lady excuses.

And he very nearly became one of those music industry tragedies we too often hear about, the victim of a plane crash while traveling from show to show. In death, he would have joined Patsy Cline, Hawkshaw Hawkins, Cowboy Copas, Gentleman Jim Reeves, Jim Croce and others who perished in small planes.

INSTEAD, HE shares a distinction with Waylon Jennings of having had a close call. Jennings, years ago as an obscure sideman, gave up his seat in a private plane to the Big Bopper, who died along with fellow rock pioneers Buddy Holly and Richie Valens in a wreck.

Today, Freddy Fender can joke about his brush with death. It happened when Fender and his manager, Sam Herro, took a private plane from Omaha to Burwell, Neb., for a performance.

"The plane was made out of fabric," Fender recalled. "You could put your finger through it."

"The pilot was a Catholic priest hired by the promoter in Burwell to fly us there."

"I wasn't afraid at the time. But I'd never flown in one of these little ones before. It had to zig zag because of the wind blowing it around."

Halfway to Burwell, the plane's tiny engine sputtered and went dead, remaining silent until the pilot, flipping switches and levers, tapped into an emergency fuel tank.

"He told us he didn't have enough gas to make it to Burwell," Fender said. "So down we went, into the cornfields."

He remembers thinking, only half jokingly, "At least we'll go down in style. The pilot can always give us the last sacraments."

THE PILOT FOUND a suitable open field and made a rough but non fatal landing. After a walk to a nearby town for fuel, they were off again.

"It's funny, but there was a concrete runway at the airport in Burwell, but the priest landed on the dirt anyway. He said he'd rather. As soon as we were on the ground I got the hell out," Fender said.

Nowadays, of course, Fender can limit his appearances to places served by safer forms of transportation and still make an enviable living.

"After 20 years of trying I've finally got my first national hit record," he exults. "I always said the Old Man upstairs was shooting craps for me. Well, He finally rolled a seven."

The world, however, took its own time in discovering Freddy Fender.

Born Baldemar Huerta in San Benito, Tex., Fender has survived such things as a stretch in prison, a less-than-amiable stint in the Marines, two years in college and jobs ranging from migrant worker to auto mechanic.

Among other things, the varied background has given Fender a genuine love of his audience, which he aims to please.

"These are my people," he says. "I dig 'em all. I even got one audience down in the valley that wants nothing

pickles in Ohio, baled hay and picked tomatoes in Indiana. When that was over came cotton-picking time in Arkansas. All we really had to look forward to was making enough money to have a good Christmas in the valley, where somehow I'd always manage to get my mother to buy me a guitar if the old one was worn out," he said.

Fender's first guitar had but three strings and there was a large hole where the back should have been, but plunking on it seemed to entertain

the week, and on weekends he dresses better than the mayor. That's what I was — working all week, then playing on weekends. I was trying to live a life of fantasy all weekend to escape the reality of home."

He did achieve modest local success as a weekend singer, particularly among the Tex-Mex (he prefers that term to currently popular euphemisms) folk of south Texas. His Spanish version of "Don't Be Cruel" sold well throughout Latin America and its success north of the border earned him nicknames like "El Bebop Kid" and "The Mexican Elvis."

HIS ONE BRIEF brush with national prominence came in 1959 when his "Wasted Days and Wasted Nights" reached pop music's Top 40 list. He followed that with "Crazy, Crazy Baby (That's What I am for You)."

But a drug arrest in Louisiana in 1960 knocked the steam from his gathering momentum. For what today seems like a minor offense, possession of a small amount of marijuana, he spent 3 1/2 years in jail.

Not surprisingly, he emerged with an intense interest in prison reform causes and a need to start over again from scratch.

Success was slow in returning, and at one point, Fender entered college with the idea of abandoning music for sociology to better support his wife and three children.

Instead, he kept at it, "Johnny Potatoes" style, singing to rowdy roadhouse audiences, where the people preferred fighting to listening, and releasing regional records through an obscure local company. Then, finally, one of them got noticed in a big way.

The song was "Before the Next Teardrop Falls," with combined Spanish and English lyrics. After it spent months on Houston's country charts, a music industry biggie, ABD Dot Records, leased rights for nationwide distribution. It turns out the record sold amazingly well everywhere else, even in the lucrative rock market.

So stardom has arrived for Freddy Fender, who, by the way, picked his stage name from his guitar brand.

He claims it hasn't changed him. He still drives a 1962 Chevy Impala, and his favorite sport remains surf fishing, which can be done free on any public beach. But it has tired him, forcing hospitalization twice in the past nine months due to fatigue.

His plans for the future include more singing and recording, of course, and maybe a country show to tour some Louisiana prisons. If all goes according to schedule, the show would co-star Roy Clark and Diana Trask and probably be televised.

FENDER SAYS HE's trying to remain a simple fellow in spite of success. His philosophy: "I leave all the fancy stuff out and just sing my butt off."

But in one category at least, airplanes, bigger now means better in Freddy's book. He made that decision just as soon as he learned some details.

"Did they all crash in small planes or big ones?" Fender asked, referring to the tragic music idols. Someone answered, "small ones."

"Well, I'm kind of glad I didn't know that. I always thought it was bigger planes they went down in. But if I had known that ... God! No wonder Sam won't fly in them anymore."

"Well, bye-bye one-motor jobs."



Freddy Fender loves his audience. 'These are my people. I dig 'em all... and I gotta' please 'em. It's a 12-hour-a-day working audience that goes out once a week. And when they go out you better give them what they want.'

but polkas. And I gotta please them, too. It's a 12-hour-a-day working audience that goes out once a week. And when they go out you better give them what they want."

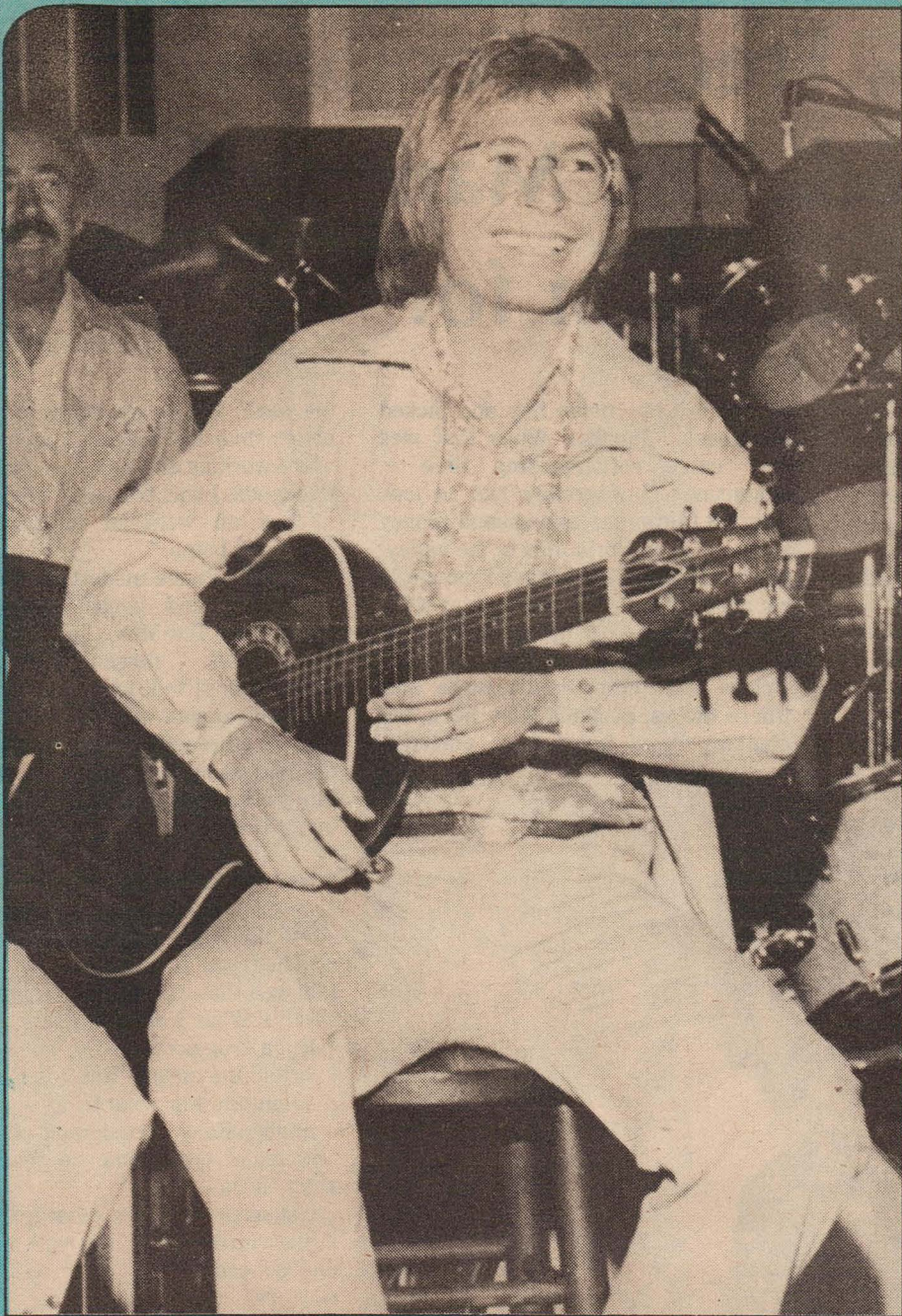
HARD WORK IS what makes up much of Fender's earliest recollections. That and music. After his parents separated when he was a boy, Fender and his family worked as migrant farm hands.

"We worked beets in Michigan,

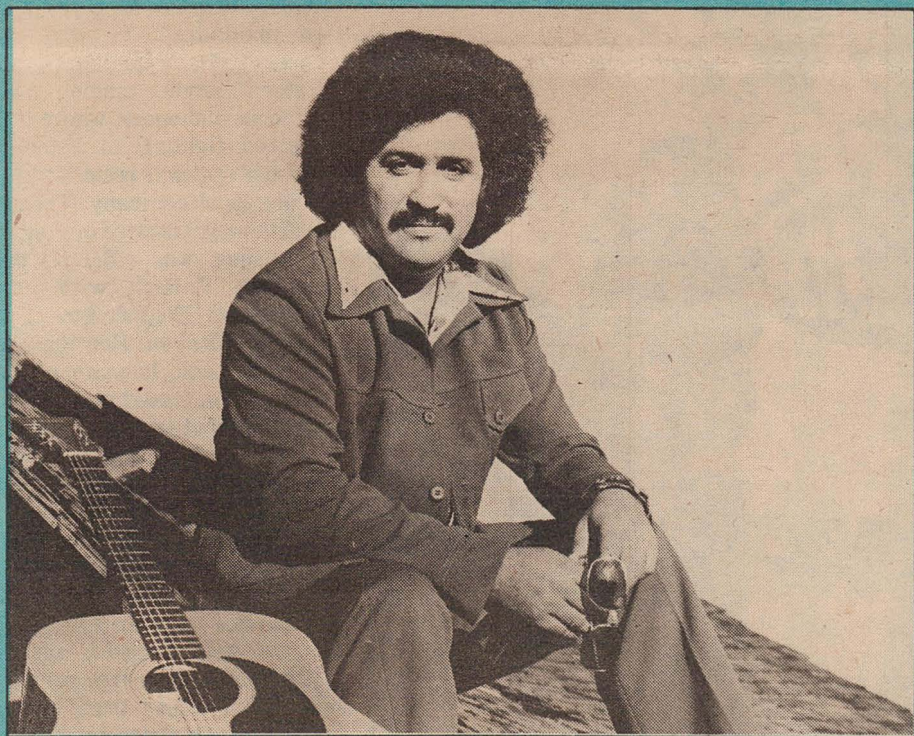
people. Within a few years he had coined a term for his evolving style, "Chicano country," and embarked on a part time career as a singing "Juan Papas," which is Spanish for "Johnny Potatoes."

"He's a guy who digs ditches all week long in the mud," Fender explained to a reporter. "Then on the weekend, he's got on new clothes and shiny shoes, playing in some nightclub."

"You never heard of 'Johnny Potatoes?' He's all greased up during



**JOHN
DENVER**



**FREDDY
FENDER**



**CHARLIE
RICH**

BY A JURY OF THE ARE AMONG COUNTRY WESTERN MUSIC'S

By Marty Gunther

Singer-songwriter John Denver turned out to be the top winner at the Country Music Association awards, but he had to accept two prizes via communications satellites.

Denver was not on hand at the Grand Ole Opry, as his fellow performers voted him their "top entertainer of the year" and selected his song, "Back Home Again," as song of the year.

He spoke briefly from Perth, Australia, where he was in the midst of a Far Eastern tour, and told the studio and television audience:

"I love singing for you, all my country music friends. I thank you, Mom and Dad."

Although Denver's family back-

ground is not traditionally "country," few disputed the presentation.

The son of an Air Force captain, his music is popular among all segments of the listening public.

Cited as the top male vocalist of the year was Waylon Jennings, the Texas dynamo who once toured with the late Buddy Holly's band.

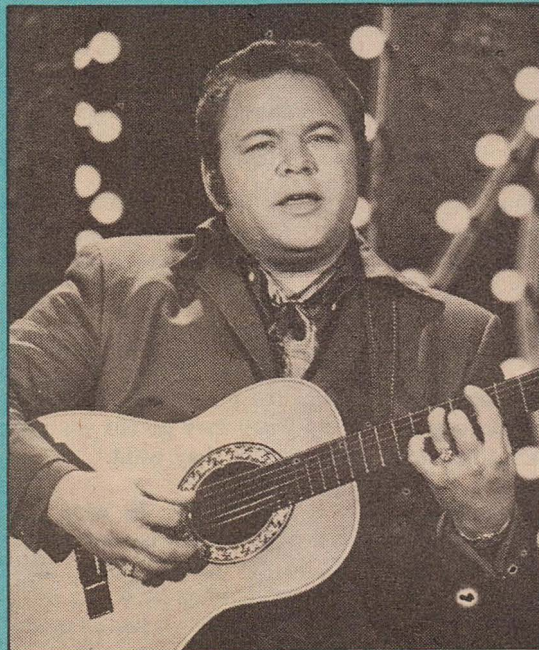
"They told me to be nice, but I don't know what they mean by that," said Jennings, well-known as an industry rebel, in accepting the prize.

One year before, he refused to appear on the CMA awards because producers did not allow enough time for him to sing a song.

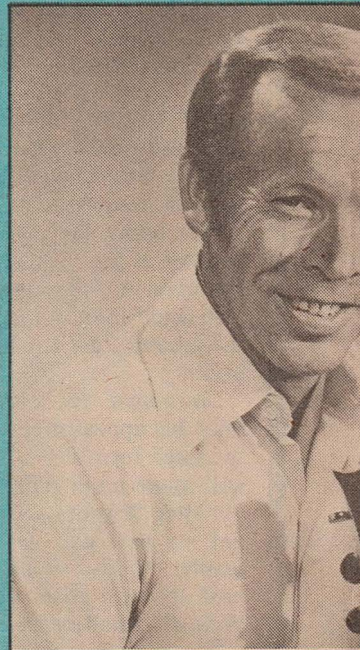
In a surprise decision, the C&W heirarchy tabbed Dolly Parton as "female vocalist of the year."



**TOMMY
OVERSTREET**



**ROY
CLARK**



**CHARLIE
LOUVIN**

THEIR PEERS, THESE COUNTRY AND TOP PERFORMERS

Most people were caught off-guard, because she has been a single for only 15 months, having ended her partnership with Porter Wagoner.

Even she was doubtful before the show.

"I'm not sure this is going to be my year," she said. "Maybe I have a fear that I never will win or am insecure about it, but I wouldn't want the award unless I really deserved it."

Miss Parton also said she did not want to back into the honor, if the C&W people were trying to make up for voting Olivia Newton-John, an Australian, as singer of the year last year.

In other areas, Freddie Fender earned the aware for top single of the year with his hit, "Before the Next Teardrop Falls."

Best album went to Ronnie Milsap, the blind singer-musician and 1974 male vocalist of the year, for "A Legend in My Time."

Loretta Lynn and Conway Twitty combined to capture duet honors for the fourth year in a row with "Feelin'." And the Statler Brothers were selected as best group for the past 12 months.

Instrumental group of the year honors went to guitarist Roy Clark and banjo player Buck Trent, who accepted in a pretaped clip from Las Vegas.

Best instrumentalist, meanwhile, went to fiddler Johnny Gimble.

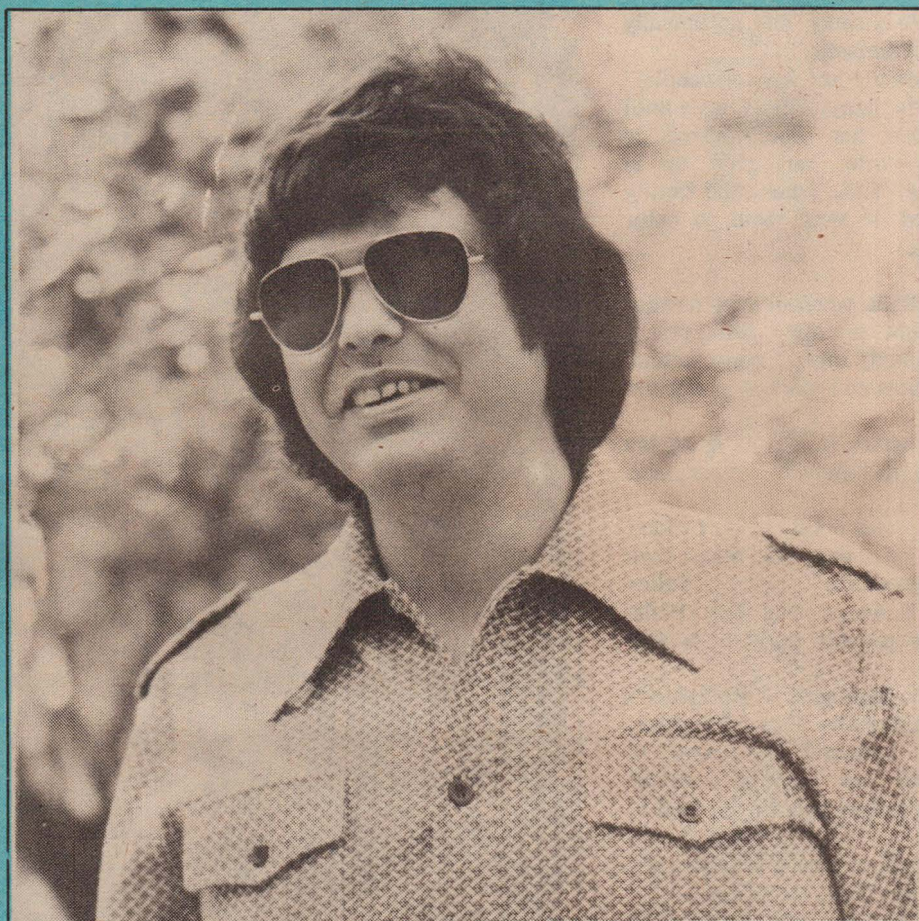
And comedienne Minnie Pearl broke into tears as the announcement came that she was being inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame.



**DOLLY
 PARTON**



**MINNIE
 PEARL**



**RONNIE
 MILSAP**



**KENNY
 PRICE**



**CONWAY TWITTY &
 LORETTA LYNN**

James Talley's Golden Rule: 'You've Got to Believe In Yourself First'

By Marty Gunther

"If I had to write my songs and sit in a room by myself for the rest of my life and sing to myself, pretty soon, I'd quit singing. The experience of sharing is part of the creative process."

The words come from James Talley, 32, a man who had to barter his skills as a carpenter in order to get his music heard.

Talley is a gentle, soft-spoken songwriter-singer whose music transcends the present to the 1930s, when Bob Wills and His Texas Playboys and Woody Guthrie were in top form.

Yet his music is the sound of today, refreshing melodies brought up to the current with a sensitive mind and delicate hand. It is a true expression of what American life was, is and still can be.

"I'm a Southwesterner, an honest one," he said in an exclusive interview. "When you're born into that kind of culture, it's with you all the way."

Talley's entry into music came by a long, circuitous route, one he literally had to build himself.

He was born to "just workin' people," in Tulsa, Okla., stayed in the area until age 3, when his folks moved to Washington state, and grew up in Albuquerque, N.M., where the family moved when he was about to enter fourth grade.

HIS FATHER worked in a powder plant (it blew up after he quit), a plutonium plant, mines, construction, sold appliances and worked as a milkman.

After his health failed, he spent his last 17 years working in a defense plant.

"Up until I was 8 years old, I didn't know there was anything other than country-and-western music," Talley said. "All I heard was Bob Wills, because my parents courted to Bob Wills."

"One of the highlights of my father's life was running into Tommy Duncan, Bob Wills' vocalist, one time in Washington, and they got drunk together. He talked about it the rest of his life."

Talley's mother was a teacher. She influenced him to go to college.

After working his way through the University of New Mexico as a horse wrangler, carpenter and department store clerk, graduating with a degree in fine arts — painting, drawing, art history — his path carried him to the West Coast for more studies.

BUT LIFE AT UCLA and Cal State-Long Beach did not agree with him. He returned to New Mexico for graduate school. Unknowingly, he began laying the groundwork for a future musical career when he decided to concentrate in American studies.

Art forms of the Depression fascinated him.

"I read 'Grapes of Wrath;' it moved me to tears," he said. "I was hooked on the subject. It was then I discovered Woody Guthrie."

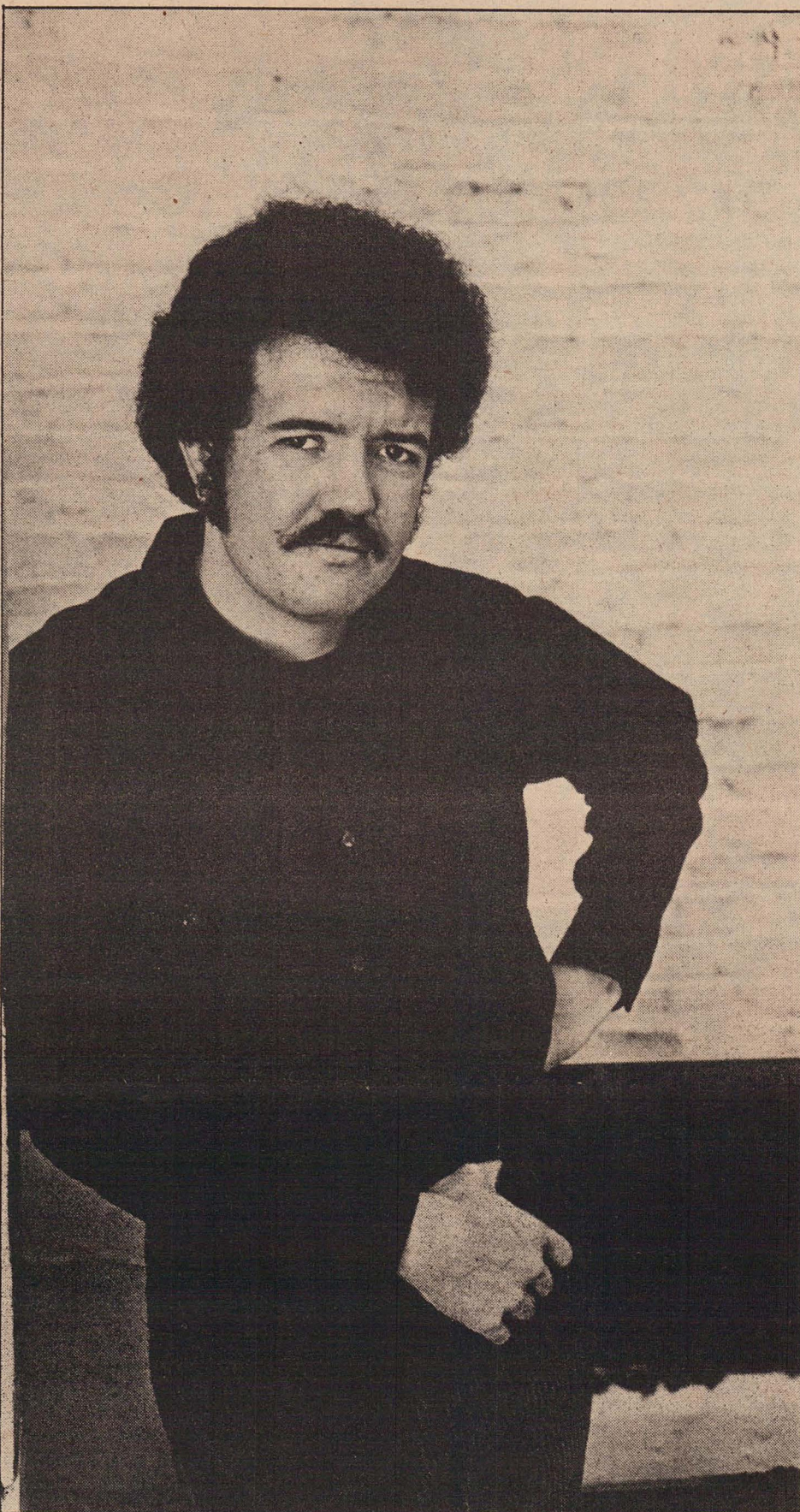
Talley read Robert Shelton's stirring biography, entitled "Born to Win."

"That started me writing songs of my own," he said. "I was so moved, when Guthrie said: 'The paint on your tractor is pretty to me.'"

Years before, Talley had taken voice lessons in college, but nothing very serious. He picked at the mandolin and guitar.

"But the songs of the people I was singing weren't saying what I wanted to say," he said. "Even Guthrie, his work was 30 years old."

"I felt like something was happening now in our culture, and here I was, stuck in a cloister, still going to classes



James Talley ... 'If you don't believe in yourself, no one else is going to. I believed in my songs, and the radio people said there was something there ... It was incredibly gratifying.'

and studying. But I wasn't fulfilling what I wanted.

"After all, how do you make a living with a degree in fine arts?"

SLOWLY, TALLEY began shifting his emphasis to music. But even though he has switched media, he sees little difference.

"Have you ever heard: 'I'm So Lonesome I Could Cry?'" he asked. "It has everything — composition, design, imagery, colors. They're all there."

"And what's the blues, if not color?"

After six years of college, Talley dropped out. He became a welfare case worker for \$420 a month.

After studying the Great Depression so carefully, he realized that the human condition is the same now as it was in the 1930s. Many human beings still are hopelessly lost.

"Seeing poverty as I did had something to do with the songs I write," Talley said. "I came to Nashville seven years ago to have them heard."

"I loaded up my 1949 Willis panel truck with four Goodyear Double Eagle recapped tires with everything I owned and headed out.

"I didn't expect raves. I didn't know anybody here. I slept in the truck behind a filling station my first two nights in town."

For the first five years, however, Talley's musical career continued to go nowhere.

HE WENT TO work for the Tennessee welfare and public health departments, served on a rat-control program and as a consultant with the U.S. Public Health Service.

Along the way, he married and had two children.

He quit the public health job for a recording contract on the Atlantic label. But that association was short-lived. The company closed down its Nashville operation.

"When my contract ran out, I had to put food on the table," he said. "I didn't want to get stuck with the government and be away from my music," Talley said.

"That's when I turned back to carpentry. Construction's not something that you've got to make a commitment to. If you want to work, you show up on the construction site. If you want to

quit, you do it.

"But I just couldn't stand it to see my music just sitting there on a shelf."

Using an idea he picked up from a man he met at a concert in Washington, D.C., Talley decided to put out an album of his own.

He got studio time by donating his services as a carpenter to help build the studio and was aided by some of the best studio musicians in Nashville.

HE PRESSED UP 1,000 promo albums on his own label and mailed them to disc jockeys around the nation.

"If you don't believe in yourself, no one else is going to," Talley said. "I believed in my songs, and the radio people said there was something there."

"The response, to me, was the best part. It was incredibly gratifying."

"When you've worked that hard and that long and you've gone out and set concrete forms ten hours a day, you come home so tired, you leave a path about the same width as the seat of your pants behind you."

"DJs from around the country wrote, saying how refreshing the music was. It meant an awful lot," Talley said.

"We stopped after the promos, though. We had no distribution; people couldn't buy it. Then, Capitol Records decided it believed in it, too."

Even that came about the hard way, though.

A producer Talley had met while doing research at the Country Music Hall of Fame told him that Frank Jones, general manager of the country-music division of Capitol, needed work on his new home.

"Part of the payment was for him to listen to my album," Talley said. "He was surprised at the quality."

THE RESULT became Capitol release ST-11416 — "Got No Bread, No Milk, No Money, But We Sure Got A Lot of Love" — his first mass-marketed LP.

"Talley's warm musical remembrances ... could have been commissioned by the Bicentennial Commission," wrote one reviewer. "James Talley is very much in the mainstream of American troubadours."

Other critics also have been equally complimentary.

But the songwriter-singer himself looks at his creations simply:

"I like to produce my records like Walker Evans did his Depression-era photographs. They expose everything right up front, whether it's a filling station or the tombstones in a Bethlehem Steel town in Pennsylvania."

"It's putting reality right under your nose, where people are saying: 'Yeah, hey, that cat feels the same way I do. I've been there.'"

"Music is the same. That's what was the great thing about Guthrie."

"I'm going around now, and I'm not a great guitar player," Talley said. "I know about three or four chords. I can move my capo up and down the neck."

"BUT I'M NOT writing songs that people have to sit down in front of the stereo to appreciate."

"I want to write songs that people can participate in. It's like Guthrie's music; it's music that anybody who can pick up a guitar can play."

"Willie Nelson's songs are the same way. You listen to 'One Day at a Time,' which I've been doing in some of my sets as a personal tribute to Willie, and it's got three chords. And it's a beautiful song."

"He's given music to the people, and that's kind of what I want to do. The whole reason for doing it is to share."

Now — finally — James Talley is getting his chance. That is what makes all the struggle worthwhile.



Football's Darrell Royal: Country Music's No. 1 Fan

By Marty Gunther

Darrel Royal may be the highly successful football coach at the University of Texas, a man who has taken 15 teams to bowl games, but he is also one of the biggest country-and-western music fans in the world.

But Royal is not one of those fans caught up in the country music swirl simply because it seems fashionable today.

"The mystery to me is why people didn't like it all along," said the man who is friend to many C&W stars. "I've loved country music ever since I was a little kid."

As a youngster in the small Western Oklahoma town of Hollis, Royal listened to country music broadcast via radio from Del Rio, Tex.

THE STATION transmitter was located in Mexico, therefore free from Federal Communications Commission power restrictions. The signal was so strong, people thousands of miles away could pick it up.

"They sold everything on their commercials," Royal recalled. "I'd listen through all those sales pitches so I could hear some pickin'."

"I used to listen to people like the Carter Family, the Light Crust Doughboys and the Stamps Baxter Quartet."

"I think country and gospel music are related in a sense. We would go to those all-day singing-and-dinner-on-the-ground affairs, and I enjoyed listening to different groups."

Royal's interest in country music goes all the way back to Jimmy Rodgers, the first superstar in the genre. As a youngster, though, he enjoyed the music without knowing who the vocalist was.

"Years later, I heard his records and found out it was the songs I had listened to as a kid," Royal said.

HIS INTEREST grew during World War II, when he and his wife, Edith, attended shows in Oklahoma City, near where he was stationed at Will Rogers Field.

Royal joined the University of Texas staff in 1957, but it was years before people began recognizing him as what could be termed "Country Music Fan No. 1."

It all began simply enough.

"Promoters of shows I would attend in Austin started recognizing me in the crowd," he said. "They'd ask me to come backstage to meet the artists. Before long, they started asking me to have my picture made with the stars."

"That's how I started developing friendships with the artists. But if it hadn't been for the promoters, I'd still be sitting out in the audience."

Royal counts such people as Charley Pride and Willie Nelson as close friends.

"I'd met Willie two or three times," he said. "But Willie isn't a real aggressive person in meeting new people."

Then, Nelson recognized him at a club. After his act, he sat down, visited and ate bacon and eggs. It was through Royal that Nelson met Mickey Rafael, the man who now serves as his harmonica player.

"They met in my hotel room one night after a game in Dallas," the coach said.

Royal met Pride at a Dallas airport.

"WE GOT TO visiting and started talking football and baseball. Charley was a pro baseball player at one time. Now both our families are real close."

The two men showed up recently at the Longhorn Ballroom in Dallas, originally opened by Bob Wills, to catch Mel Tillis' show.

It was the first time Royal and Tillis met. Soon, however, they were talking football. The singer recalled how he had been a runningback at a high school in Pahokee, Fla.

When the coach asked: "What for-

mation did you use?" Tillis replied: "The inverted-T."

Since even the knowledgeable Royal never had heard of the offensive spread, Tillis had to demonstrate, with Royal serving as the football center.

One of the things Royal enjoys most about country music is to be around musicians during a pickin' session. It is not uncommon for him to have several of his artist friends gather in his home or hotel room following a Texas game.

His first involved Ray Price.

"These pickin' sessions aren't planned," he said. "If these people don't feel like pickin', you can't ask 'em to do it. It just happens."

ONE NIGHT IN Nashville, Tenn., Royal ran in to Red Lane and Larry Gatin, a couple of friends.

"They asked me to come up to their hotel room," he said. "Mickey Newbury was there, and it was the first time I'd ever met him. So they started pickin', and it lasted until 4 a.m."

Other than beating Oklahoma on the gridiron, his greatest enjoyment came through attending a Nashville recording session.

"That was with Charlie Rich," Royal said. "I got to meet the musicians, and it helped me to learn more about what a great job they do. Now, when I listen to a song, I like to know who the musicians were. I pay more attention to the instruments."

When anyone asks the coach what his favorite songs are, he really cannot attempt to name them all.

A few include "Healing Hands of Time" and "Touch Me" by Nelson, Tom T. Hall's "Watermelon Wine," Merle Haggard's "Today I Started Loving You Again," Johnny Cash's "Hey Porter" and several Pride hits.

While his association with many current artists is well known, Royal also shows a deep interest in the past, especially the works of such people as Pee Wee King, Lefty Frizzell, Wills, Hank Williams and Hank Thompson.

THROUGH HIS friendship with the stars, Royal frequently has been privileged to hear songs before they are recorded.

One involved Kris Kristofferson, who was visiting the Royal home with wife Rita Coolidge.

"Kris had just written 'Why Me Lord?' and he told Charlie Rich that if he wanted to be a star to record it," the coach said. "Now this was before Charlie Rich became so big in the business."

"So Kris asked me if they could go into a back room, where he could play the song. I said: 'Sure.' Well, when he started, everybody got caught up in it. Then Rita and Margaret Ann, Charlie's wife, started harmonizing."

"For about 20 minutes, they sang and played. Of course, the song later became a monster."

The high regard C&W artists have for Royal is demonstrated by the fact that he is mentioned in "I Ain't All Bad," written by Johnny Duncan and recorded by Pride.

He is the Darrell mentioned in the line: "Tomorrow night I'm in Austin, I got some old friends to see. There's Darrell, Jeff, Willie and Sam and the girl with the long dark hair."

"THE FIRST TIME I heard it was last year, down in Jacksonville, while we were practicing for the Gator Bowl," Royal said.

"We'd finished practicing one afternoon, and I looked up, and here was Charley coming across the field with a big tape recorder over his shoulder."

"He said: 'I got something I want you to hear.'"

"So he started the tape, and I liked the song right away. But when he got to the part about me, I said: 'Wait a minute. Does that say what I think it says?'"

"He said it did and backed up and played it several times. Certainly, it was a big thrill for me."

It is quite a tribute to the man who must be Country Music No. 1.



For David Allen Coe, the Chains Have Been Removed

By Tom Lutz

Writing Tanya Tucker's smash hit "Would You Lay With Me" didn't just change David Allan Coe's life — it saved it.

A man who spent 20 years behind bars, Coe once had his future measured in the steps it would take to walk from his prison cell to the electric chair. Seemingly destined to accumulate records rather than record them, he has actually spent more time behind bars than outside them.

But since he cut "You Never Even Called Me By My Name," his infamous life became one of fame.

The product of a broken home, the Akron, Ohio, native landed on the wrong side of the law early "by being," he admits, "incorrigible and not going to school. The first crime I got caught for was car theft."

THE LONGEST TIME he was out of jail at any one time was two weeks. And when he was sprung, nobody was there to help him along and reshape his life into something constructive and useful.

Then the worst came. He was condemned to die for killing another Ohio state prison inmate who attempted to force him to commit an indecent act. A career in music for Coe was as close as a \$100,000 home.

As with many condemned men, the thought of the electric chair became something Coe learned to live with.

"At first, I just kept thinking it was a joke, that they couldn't do this to me."

"But what affected me even more emotionally than anything else was when I learned that my sentence had been commuted to life. It took two or three weeks for me to realize what had happened. I just walked around in a daze."

That moment came when the governor of Ohio found mercy for Coe.

"In Ohio, the governor has the right to commute the sentences of a certain number of prisoners during his term of office. There was no particular reason why I was one of them, but whatever it was, I'm thankful."

Serving time in reformatories, jails and prisons, Coe became interested in music. "But I was more into rhythm and blues and I didn't know anything about country music. I used to do a lot of variety shows in prison."

KNOWING THE despair of being behind bars and the joy of freedom, Coe talks freely about his prison life — and without bitterness.

In 1967, Coe got out of prison on parole. He headed for his mother's farm near Wheeling, W.Va. It was while living there that he got his first touch with country music.

"I started listening to bands around here and then I began going to the Wheeling Jamboree. I had been pickin' all my life and sometimes when I would get around the bands they would ask me to play with them."

In 1968, he packed away a lot of determination and enthusiasm and took off for Nashville to try his hand in the music field. It wasn't so easy in the beginning, but the promise of better things in the future beat what he'd left behind in prison. There was a lot of struggling once he got to Nashville.

Then he met a person who extended that helping hand he had been wanting earlier in life.

"KRIS KRISTOFFERSON is the guy who turned my head around on country music," said Coe. "The kind of country music he was writing was different than any I had ever heard and I really liked it."

"I met Kris in his hotel room one time and played some of my songs for him. He liked them and he helped me by

letting me guest with him on some of his shows. I'd usually do four or five songs."

Coe got his first break in recording when he cut an album, "Penitentiary Blues," for SSS International. Then he recorded "How High's the Watergate, Martha," and "Keep Those Big Wheels Humming" on the Plantation label.

But while trying to find the door to success, it was Tanya Tucker's Columbia recording of Coe's "Would You Lay With Me In A Field of Stone" that really turned the key. Coe then was the writer of a national number one song.

Even with its popularity the song received some backlash due to its title, but Coe insists it has been misinterpreted.

"It wasn't intended to be a dirty song at all," he said. "It's all about wedding vows and I actually wrote it for my brother when he got married."

Coe soon signed a recording contract with Columbia, where he has had two albums released. While the first didn't receive all that much reaction, the second, "Once Upon A Rhyme," gave him a boost, mainly because of the inclusion of "You Never Even Called Me By Name."

ON THE ALBUM, the playing time is five minutes but when Columbia decided to release it as a single the time was cut to approximately three minutes. The deletion didn't hurt the main punch of the song.

Written by Steve Goodman, it is the type of song that immediately caught on with the public. It is well produced and Coe is able to present his singing talent in such a way as to make him a favorite among country music fans. It is decidedly country and the humorous aspect causes it to be the kind of song which fans are either discussing or singing themselves.

Usually considered on the progressive side of country music due to his background and association with artists like Willie Nelson, Coe can and does belt out hardcore country songs with the best of them.

"I sing songs from people like George Jones," he says, "and I really liked Hank Williams. He had something to say. I like the philosophy he had of telling the truth in his songs."

Coe's new life may be a world away from his past, but he hasn't forgotten how it was.

"We do shows and benefits in any prison that asks us," he said. "We also recommend the Seven Step Foundation, a rehabilitation program for ex-convicts. He also has an interest in a publishing company, Captive Music, organized as an outlet for convicts and ex-convicts."

Coe doesn't feel that success has changed his basic attitudes. "My values haven't changed. I still wear levis and old cowboy boots."

HE MAY NOT HAVE thought of ever getting into music or living in a \$100,000 home when he was in prison but today he has both.

"I now live in a \$100,000 house and have three Cadillacs," he says. "I used to live in a \$10,000 house and own one Cadillac. But it wouldn't bother me if I had to go back to the \$10,000 house and one Cadillac. I don't suffer from a star complex."

Then he explained why he feels the way he does.

"I wrote the liner in one of my albums to Mickey Newbury. It says that freedom is knowing how to remember the weight of your chains after they've been removed. The only thing that is important to me is freedom."

And today they do call him by his name.

Hoyt Axton Has One Purpose in Songwriting

.. 'I'm Just Looking to Make People Feel Better'

By Susan Scott

Singer Hoyt Axton has climbed into the Top Ten of country charts with "Lion in the Winter," "Boney Fingers" and "When the Morning Comes" in the past year, but he still considers himself only a songwriter.

The love for music is traditional in Axton's family.

"My parents were school teachers," he said. My mother, Mae Boren Axton, wrote songs for pleasure. She also helped Elvis Presley write 'Heartbreak Hotel.' I grew up around people into music for the joy they got out of sharing.

"It may sound corny, but it's true. Everything else that I've gotten from it is frosting."

A man who has written songs for such a wide divergence of performers as bluesman B.B. King, Elvis Presley, Arlo Guthrie, Anne Murray, Glen Campbell, the Steppenwolf rock group, Cher, John Denver, Waylon Jennings, Lynn Anderson and many, many others, Axton said:

"I USED TO BE a real bad guy. Fist fights in dark alleys and saloon brawls with broken whisky bottles.

"I worked as a rambling minstrel for a while, playing country and folk songs, interspersed with a few original compositions up and down the West Coast.

"I'd done my first recording session in Nashville," he said. "And it really was bad. It was a good time, but I knew I didn't have anything going.

"So I hit the road. Had an old car and took off in it. I don't think I've really had anything to say with my music with any comprehension. I don't feel I've ever been able to get up in front of an audience and give them full value for the money they paid to get in.

"Until last year, that is. I've finally found out how to do it, and I think that the way — for me — is to try to elevate my own spirits."

COINCIDENTALLY, it only has been within the past year that Axton has become known as a performer, despite years of appearing in public.

Previously, he co-wrote "Greenback Dollar," which became a major hit for the Kingston Trio.

His biggest early songwriting hit, however, was "The Pusher," recorded by Steppenwolf. After it caught on, it was banned from the airwaves because of its theme.

At the time, some people falsely believed that Axton was condoning the use of heavy drugs. Instead, he really was trying to be critical of the drug scene.

"I didn't care about the airplay aspect," he said. "As an example, man, a kid's father came up to me.

"The kid was young — about 14 — and the guy says: 'This is what I think of your record,' and he snapped it, broke it in half in front of my face and threw it on the ground."

The Federal Communications Commission also banned "Snowblind Friends," another Axton song, from air play. But he is emphatic about not wanting to be typecast as a crusader.

"I've always abused everything," he said. "I grew up as an athlete. I didn't smoke until I was 21. I didn't drink until I was 18, so I had a strong physical

body, which is just now beginning to fall apart after years of abuse!

"You know what I'm saying? I just went ahead and did everything that was going down.

"Boom! Gimme dat fast, hard L.A. music life, baby! That's how I was. That had some influence on the music — hanging out with people that were pushing junk."

ANOTHER OF AXTON'S most popular songs has been "Joy to the World," cut by the Three Dog Night rock group.

"I thought it stunk," he said candidly. "The original song was kind of a drunken, funky affair. But I learned to live with their interpretation as the song climbed the charts in virtually every country in the world.

"That's probably the most important song I've ever written. It communicates."

Axton does not place much im-

portance on becoming famous. His albums are peppered with superstars, several of whom might even steal the focus from his performance.

But that is fine by him.

His current album includes cuts with Linda Ronstadt and Arlo Guthrie, Cheech and Chong, Bob Lind, Ronee Blakely and Tom Jans. Jeff Baker, Doug Dillard, John Hartford and James Burton contribute solos.

"I've known all the cats I used since they started, and we're friends," Axton said. "Cheech and Chong busted their butts to get to do my sessions.

"What it comes down to is that life is pretty complex, and we're pretty limited. As a human, I don't like to admit there was a whole lot to the universe other than my personal ego trip.

"But I got down to reading a few books and finally saw it that way. You can either be part of the creative forces or just float along.

"WELL, I LIKE to be active, and I don't wanna be destructive," Axton said.

"I wrote a song, entitled 'Less Than a Song,' and that was the beginning of my consciousness. I thought: 'That's it. That's right. I'm less than the song.'"

Axton likes simple lyrics in the tunes he writes.

"But a whole lot more than the kind of 'C'mon, we'll-get-drunk-and-I'll-chase-your-old-lady-around-the-bar, you-can-chase-my-old-lady, then-we'll-fist-fight-and-go-out-and-wreck-our-cars' that seems to be the subject matter of most of the stuff I'm hearing these days," he said.

"Songwriting is like anything that involves the creative process. You get it out of the ether.

"I'm just looking to make people feel better. I'm after everybody. I think God is the positive aspect of the Universe, and I want to write and be positive."



Hoyt Axton ... 'I Grew up around people into music for the joy they got out of sharing. It may sound corny, but it's true. Everything else I've gotten from it is frosting.'

Nashville Is More Than a Town

Continued from page 3

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HOWEVER, TWO years before Rodgers cut his first record, an event took place that was destined to establish a Tennessee town as the mecca of American music.

In 1925 the city fathers of Nashville considered their city the "Athens" of the South. They were extremely proud of the city's symphony orchestra, its theaters and museums. No other city below the Mason and Dixon line was more culturally progressive than Nashville, with the possible exception of New Orleans.

But, on the night of Nov. 28, 1925, George D. Hay changed all of that.

Hay was a former newspaper reporter who left journalism to become the director of Radio Station WSM in Nashville in 1925. While searching his imaginative brain for programming ideas, it occurred to him that his listeners might be entertained by some of the hillbilly musicians from the surrounding communities.

He decided to call the program the "WSM Barn Dance" and set out to recruit musicians.

As a result of his efforts, on the night of Nov. 28, 1925, a group of pickers and fiddlers from Sumner County gathered in a small studio at WSM and tuned their instruments while awaiting the "on air" signal.

Promptly at 8 p.m. the "WSM Barn Dance" signed on the air to the sound of Uncle Jimmy Thompson's fiddle and a legend was born. Within a year, the "WSM Barn Dance" would become known as the Grand Ole Opry.

FIFTY YEARS later, the Opry is still being broadcast.

In 1945, Hay authored a book reflecting back on that first fateful night in 1925.

"Realizing the wealth of folk music material and performers in the Tennessee hills, I welcomed the appearance of Uncle Jimmy Thompson and his blue ribbon fiddle," Hay wrote.

"Uncle Jimmy told us he had a thousand tunes. Past 80 years of age, he was given a comfortable chair in front of an old carbon microphone. I

presented Uncle Jimmy and announced that he would be glad to answer requests for old time tunes. Almost immediately, telegrams began to pour into WSM.

"One hour later, at 9 p.m., we asked Uncle Jimmy if he hadn't done enough fiddling to which he replied: 'A man don't get warmed up in an hour. I just won an eight-day fiddling contest down in Dallas and here's my blue ribbon to prove it!'"

The show was something more than a success with the listening audience. It soon was attracting almost everybody in the Nashville area who owned a guitar.

"After three or four weeks of this fiddle business I was besieged with other fiddlers, banjo pickers, guitar players and a lady who played an old zither," wrote Hay.

"Her name was Mrs. Cline and she made several appearances in those days."

THERE WERE NO singers on the early Opry shows -- only instrumentalists.

The first full-fledged band on the Opry was a group called "The Possum Hunters" from Sumner County. It was headed by a well-known physician named Dr. Humphrey Bate who played the harmonica. Accompanying him on the piano was his daughter, Alcyone.

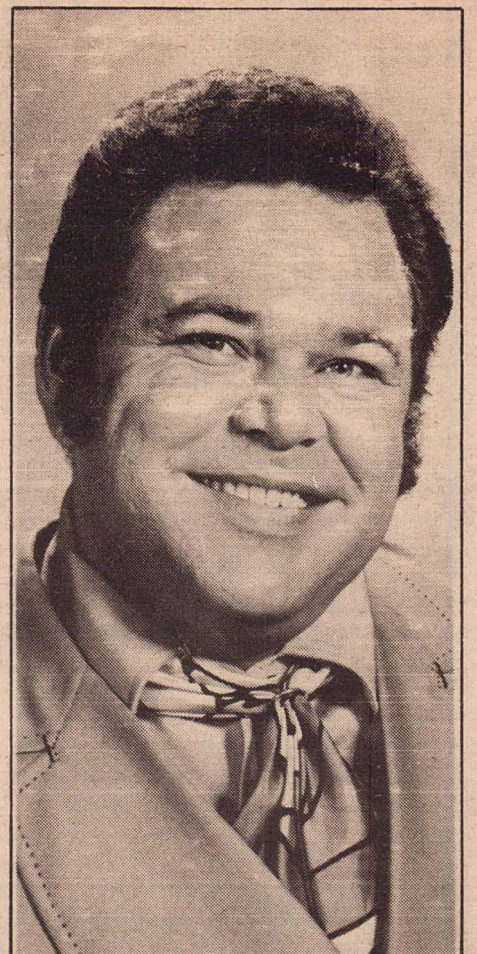
A half century later, Alcyone Bate still occasionally appears on the Grand Ole Opry.

The Possum Hunters was the first of a long string of instrumental groups to hit the Opry airwaves in those early years. Others included groups with such colorful names as the Gully Jumpers, the Fruit Jar Drinkers, the Dixie Liners and the Crook Brothers.

But, the biggest single attraction to the Grand Ole Opry during those formative years was a gent called Uncle Dave Macon. He first appeared on the Opry in 1926 and was promptly dubbed "the Dixie Dew Drop."

For some 15 years, he would be the Opry's premier star.

From the first, curious onlookers showed up at the WSM studios on Saturday nights to watch the per-



One of the early modern stars of Grand Ole Opry was singer Roy Clark.

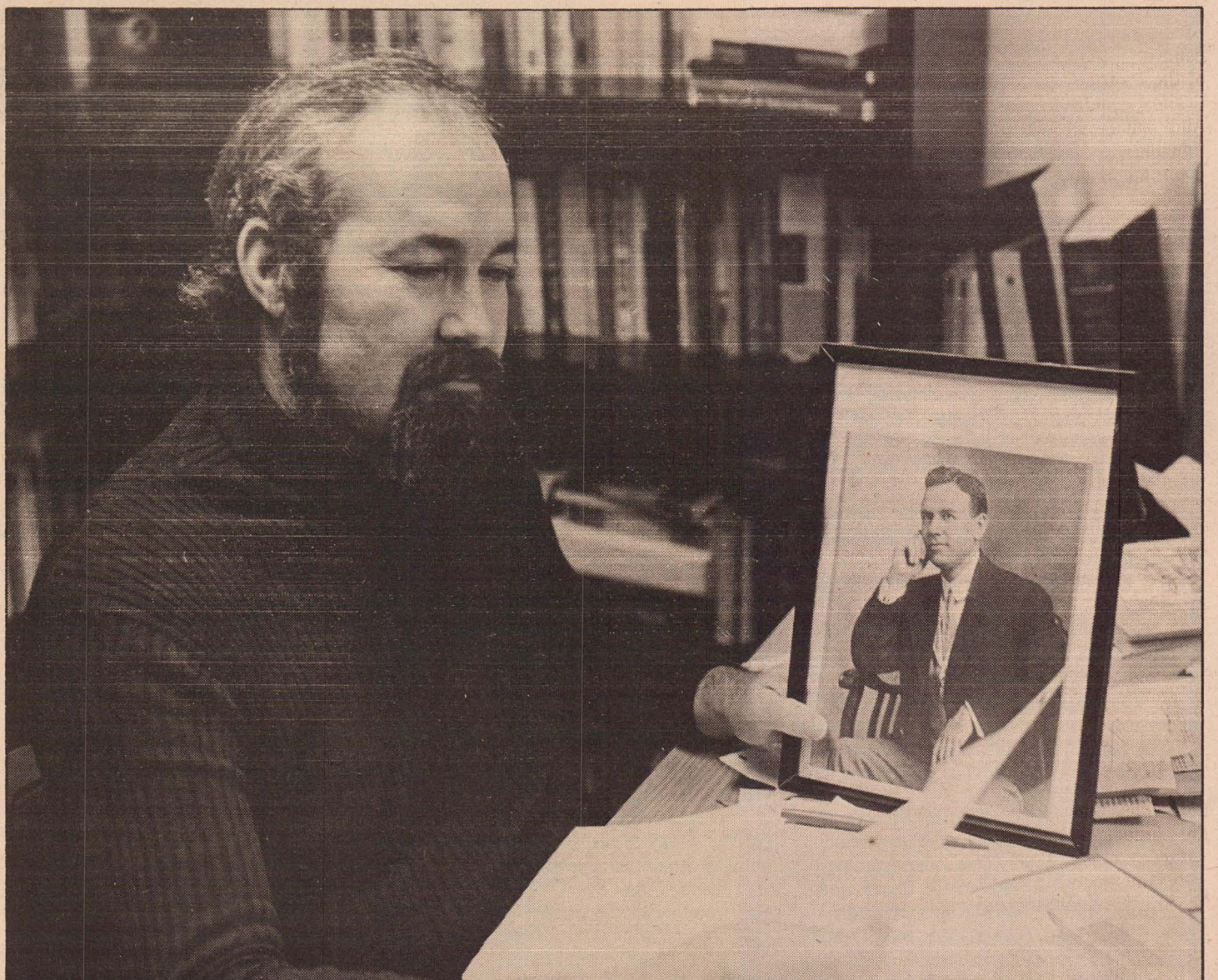
formers. For several weeks the musicians outnumbered the audience in the studio. Then, the situation began to reverse.

SOON, THE SMALL studio was so crowded it was almost impossible to produce the show.

In order to keep the audience from interfering with the show, WSM built another studio, complete with an auditorium that seated 500.

Soon, the new auditorium was overflowing on Opry nights. To accommodate the swelling crowd, the radio station rented the Hillsboro Theater and expanded the program to two shows each Saturday night.

But, the theater proved too small for



Walter D. Haden, a professor at the University of Tennessee and a close follower of Country and Western music, and photo of Marion T. Slaughter, the real "first" of the country music scene.

--For Millions It Is a Way of Life



One of Opry's earliest 'biggies' -- Red Foley and the Cumberland Ridge Runners.

the increasing number of spectators who showed up for the Grand Ole Opry. Once more the show was moved -- this time to an outdoor tabernacle by the Cumberland River. There, more than 3,000 fans showed up each week to sit on splintery wooden benches and stomp their feet on a sawdust floor in time to the music.

Soon, even the tabernacle could not hold all of the audience.

By this time, crowd control at the Grand Ole Opry was becoming a major concern for officials at the radio station. After some deliberation, they decided to charge an admission of 25 cents in an effort to hold down the size of the crowd.

They rented War Memorial Auditorium in downtown Nashville figuring its 2,200 seats would accommodate a paying crowd. They were wrong.

By this time it was evident the Opry had become so popular it needed a larger, permanent home. In the early 1930s, the show was moved once more -- this time to Ryman Auditorium, the largest theater facility in middle Tennessee at the time.

THE RADIO STATION eventually purchased the auditorium and spent hundreds of thousands of dollars renovating it.

For more than 30 years Ryman Auditorium was home for the Grand Ole Opry but, eventually, this facility also was too small. Fans wanting to see the show had to reserve tickets months in advance.

So in March of 1974, Opryland U.S.A. was unveiled -- a gleaming modern structure specifically designed to accommodate the Nashville show. Then President Richard Nixon showed up to take part in the opening ceremonies.

In his book, Hay admits that even in his wildest dreams he never foresaw the amazing destiny of his little Saturday night "Barn Dance."

By the early 1930s, the Opry had become a virtual Saturday night cult in rural America.

The nation was gripped in the Great Depression. Cornmeal was a staple, flour biscuits a luxury. Shoes were a necessity, new socks a luxury. And, a radio on a farm was a community

oddy.

In that era, any farmer who could afford a radio and did not invite his less fortunate neighbors over to hear the Grand Ole Opry on Saturday night was certain to receive a cold reception from his brethren at church the following morning.

AS A RESULT of such peer pressure the airing of the Grand Ole Opry became an occasion for a weekly social gathering at the farmhouse with the radio in many rural communities.

While the men adjusted the aerial wire (usually in a tall tree) for the best possible reception, and the children scampered about the yard, the women would busy themselves with meal preparation and the latest gossip.

Later, all would gather in the living room, or perhaps on the front porch if the weather was warm, and listen to the music of the Carter Family, Uncle Dave Macon and Grampa Jones.

From such social gatherings, a grass roots subculture of dedicated country and western fans emerged.

For many who lived in remote areas, church on Sunday and listening to the Opry on Saturday represented their only social activities.

In later years, when they immigrated to the big city defense plants they maintained a stubborn dedication to the Opry.

Although Nashville had the Grand Ole Opry, the city's growth as a recording and song publishing center did not take place until the 1940s and early 1950s.

THE MAN LARGELY responsible for expanding the Nashville recording industry was a lanky Alabama drifter named Hank Williams. As a shipyard worker during World War II, Williams penned songs by the bushel and dreamed of the day he could perform them.

He wrote more than 600 songs in a brief career that ended with his tragic death at age 29 on New Year's Day in 1953. By his own admission, some of the songs were "pretty awful." But, many of them were classics.

Today, it is almost impossible to watch a television variety show without hearing at least one Hank Williams song. Symphony orchestras around the world have given concerts dedicated to

his music.

Williams began his career by singing on small town radio stations and giving concerts in rural school gymnasiums. In three years, he was the hottest country and western performer in the country.

Some of his classics included "Jambalaya," "Cold Cold Heart," "Lovesick Blues," "You Win Again," "Cheating Heart," and "I Can't Help it if I'm Still in Love With You."

Other popular singers of that era included the like of Eddy Arnold, Ernest Tubb, Red Foley.

Then, in the mid-1950s, a young singer from Memphis cut a recording of an old country song titled "Blue Moon of Kentucky," giving it a strange, upbeat tempo. The record was a success. And, the singer, a duck-tailed youth with busy hips named Elvis Presley, had changed the direction of country music once more.

THE SO-CALLED rockabilly brand of country music created by Presley was popular through the early 1960s -- and those were rather lean years for the country purists. By the late 1960s, the nation's youth was being turned on by acid rock. But, the 1970s have brought unparalleled success for country music

-- along with a great deal of controversy in the Nashville music industry.

Pop singers are invading Nashville's recording studios and creating "cross-over" hits that play on both top 40 and country radio stations. Some Nashville musicians welcome the invasion. But the traditionalists charge that the pop singers are exploiting country music.

They fear that, if the trend continues, traditional country music will be lost in a miss-mash of musical styles.

If one person can be blamed for the controversy, he is Kris Kristofferson, who wrote the first "cross-over" hits.

Kristofferson was a Rhodes Scholar who studied English at Oxford England and had ambitions to write the "Great American Novel." But, he became fascinated with music and was drawn to Nashville. "When I got there I rocketed straight to the bottom," he recalls.

Kristofferson's songs, like "Me and Bobby McGee," and "Sunday Morning Coming Down," were ignored while he swept out recording studios to make a meager living.

Johnny Cash, then the biggest name in the business, gave him his first break

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Johnny Cash Relives His 'Spiritual Odyssey'

CONTINUED FROM FRONT COVER

"And I gleaned a lot of wisdom, I believe, about what's right and wrong for me."

The only trouble was, Cash became a human tape recorder, jotting down everything. By the time he neared the end of his story, he realized he had written about four times too much. The book had more pages than a Russian novel.

Cash prayed and followed his own conscience in respect to what to leave in and what to take out. He sought the counsel of his wife, June Carter Cash, who more than any other person believed in him in the dark days and stuck by him until he regained his health.

TODAY, CASH NOT only has a best seller but is satisfied that he has told the Johnny Cash story as best it can be told.

Cash started life as the son of a poor Arkansas cotton farmer. He hauled water for a road gang at age 10, was pulling a nine-foot cotton sack at 12. As often as not, spring floods along the Mississippi washed out most of the family's efforts.

Still, he was a bright young man who sensed the value of education and self-improvement. He joined the Air Force, and spent the Korean War in a safe outpost in Germany, where he bought his first guitar.

A military cryptographer, he pulled a lot of duty alone. During the quiet hours, he practiced his instrument, and wrote songs. He also read a lot of history.

While still in the service during the early 1950s, he wrote what would become one of his most famous songs, "Folsom Prison Blues," after seeing a movie about life in the famous penitentiary.

"There wasn't much romance to the writing of 'Folsom Prison Blues,'" he said. "I saw the movie, liked it and wrote the song. That's all there was to that."

OUT OF THE SERVICE, Cash gravitated to Tennessee where exciting things were beginning to happen. A movement called "Rockabilly" was becoming the rage of the pop music industry, thanks to a young ex-Mississippian named Elvis Presley.



The one person, above everyone else, who believed in Johnny Cash in the dark days and stuck by him was his wife, June Carter.

Today, Cash is so solidly recognized as a country artist that one tends to forget that he was, at the start of his career, a teenage idol.

His first big hit, "I Walk The Line," expressed the sentiment of devotion to a woman on a level several cuts above that usually expressed in a popular song. In fact, the song stood out because the kind of love Johnny sang about bordered on the unnatural: Is any human being worthy of such devotion?

Nonetheless, "I Walk The Line" was a smash hit. He followed it with "Ballad Of A Teenage Queen," a less memorable song which did the job of establishing him as something more than a one-hit singer.

Drug addiction accompanied him to success. Thanks to his talent and ambition, he managed to stay on top far past the point where he should have cracked up. But finally the piper had to be paid.

Cash writes with painful honesty about his drug-induced crash.

"**THE ADDICTION** was a physical thing," he said. "But it also was a psychological and spiritual addiction. The mind and the spirit were bound as the body was."

"And when I freed the body, I freed the mind to start searching and seeking, and I freed the spirit to aspire back to God."

There were plenty of warnings, before his collapse, that Johnny was in trouble. He was erratic and irritable. He was very high or very low with not much in-between. He became notorious as a "no-show" at concerts and was losing bookings.

When he went berserk one night and woke up in a jail cell the next day, not knowing what he had done or how he got there, he knew he had come to a dead end. In fact, death itself was in sight unless he changed his ways.

A sympathetic deputy sheriff who knew who he was got through to the hazy-minded singer that he needed help — fast.

Broken in body and spirit, Cash was taken into the home of the late Ezra J. (Pop) Carter, patriarch of the famed musical Carter Family and father of his wife-to-be, June Carter.

June had been part of the Johnny Cash touring show for several years and knew that he was worth saving.

SHE ENLISTED THE help of Dr. Nat Winston, former head of the Tennessee Department of Mental Health, who also was a country music authority. He agreed to help the broken-down singer through the pitfalls and triumphs of drug withdrawal.

All during his convalescence, Cash was welcomed into the Pop Carter home.

And as Cash himself has written, as the drug habit lost its clutch, his spirit

and his mind began to return.

Carter had a library containing about 2,000 books on religion — by far the largest such collection of faith literature that Johnny ever had seen.

At first, the singer was a bit bored at Carter's interest in "dusty old books" — until he learned what was in them.

Carter, a self-educated theologian, slowly turned on Johnny to the wonders of God.

"As time went by," Cash recalled, "and as I came closer to breaking the drug habit, and the more I listened to him, the more I realized he had something I didn't have."

"**HE HAD FOUND** a whole spiritual world that I knew was there, but didn't have the key to."

"And the more I talked to him, the more I realized I had to get into those books of his. So I learned to love his books, and in doing so I learned to love the Bible and the Word."

Two years before his death in January 1975, Carter began turning over his whole library to the man who now had become his son-in-law.



"When I freed the body ... I freed the spirit to aspire back to God."

Johnny's own book, his spiritual odyssey, is dedicated to Pop Carter.

Although Johnny Cash has found his way, he is not foolish enough to believe that he automatically is "clean" for all time.

"**ONE BIG THING** I've learned," he said, "is that you don't go around telling yourself that you are infallible, that you can't mess up again, because I know I could."

"I don't think I will. I work at it every day not to fail again."

"I'm very confident of the future, very much sure of myself."

"That assurance is found on the fact that I admitted to myself that I failed and I grew a little when I finally did that."

"In order for a person to grow and stand on his feet, he has to admit that he has failed, if indeed he has."

"If a man doesn't admit he has failed when in fact he has failed, then that's the second failure — and it is far bigger than the first."



Johnny Cash is satisfied that his 'Man In Black' tells the Johnny Cash story as best it can be told. Sharing his happiness (left) at the publication of his book are his mother-in-law, Maybelle Carter; his son, John Carter Cash, and Zondervan Publishing Co., President Peter Kladder.

Nashville Is More Than a Town --For Millions It Is a Way of Life

Continued from page 17

and from that point, Kristofferson rocketed in the other direction.

His brand of music encouraged other performers to break away from the traditional Nashville sound.

AMONG THE REBELS are the so-called "Texas Outlaws," who are starting a new country music cult in Austin Texas. Leaders of the "Outlaws" are Waylen Jennings and Willie Nelson.

Their music, directed at a younger audience, is gathering teenage disciples by the millions. Only recently, a Willie Nelson concert in South Texas drew over 70,000 loyalists.

KRISTOFFERSON'S brand of music opened the way for cross-over performers ranging from Charlie Rich to Olivia Newton-John.

Although something of a mini-war still is being waged between the Nashville traditionalists and the innovators, one fact is indisputable. Nashville's music not only influences, but dominates, all of the other styles and the Grand Ole Opry is still the mecca of country music.



Another of the big names of early Grand Ole Opry days was Roy Acuff.

Country musician Roy Clark possesses enough talent to frequently guest host the Johnny Carson tonight show and perform before millions. But, he admits to a special thrill each time he returns to the Opry.

Currently, there are 60 members on

the Grand Ole Opry and their musical tastes run the gamut of country music from old traditional to modern country.

They are: Roy Acuff, Bill Anderson, Ernie Ashworth, Bobby Bare, Jim Ed Brown, Archie Campbell, The Carlises, Jerry Clower, Wilma Lee & Stony Cooper, The Crook Brothers, Skeeter Davis, Roy Drusky, Lester Flatt, The Four Guys, Billy Grammer, Jack Green, David Houston, Jan Howard, Stonewall Jackson, Jim & Jesse, George Jones, Grampa Jones, Hank Locklin, Lonzo & Oscar, Bobby Lord, Charlie Louvin, Bob Luman and Loretta Lynn.

Also Barbara Mandrell, Sam & Kirk McGee, Bill Monroe, George Morgan, Jimmy Newman, The Osborne Brothers, Dolly Parton, Minnie Pearl, Stu Phillips, Webb Pierce, Ray Pillow, Jeanne Pruett, Del Reeves, Marty Robbins, Earl Scruggs, Jeannie Seely, Jean Shepard, The Ralph Sloan Dancers, Connie Smith Hank Snow, The Stony Mountain Cloggers, Ernest Tubb, Justin Tubb, Porter Wagoner, Billy Walker, Charlie Walker, Dottie West, The Wilburn Brothers, The Willis Brothers, Del Wood, Marion Worth and Tammy Wynette.

OVER THE YEARS country music's greatest have appeared on the Grand Ole Opry stage as either a guest or as a past member. Some of those people are: David (Stringbean) Akeman, Rex Allen, Eddy Arnold, Chet Atkins, Hoyt Axton, Smiley Burnette, the Carter Family, Johnny Cash, Roy-Clar, Perry Como, Jimmy Dean, the Everly Brothers, Tennessee Ernie Ford, Lefty Frizzell, Don Gibson, Mickey Gilley, Merle Haggard, Tom T. Hall, Johnny Horton, Waylon Jennings, Brenda Lee, Jerry Lee Lewis, Willie Nelson, Charlie Rich, Tex Ritter, Johnny Rodriguez, Linda Ronstadt, Cal Smith, Carl Smith, Ray Stevens, Billy Strange, Mel Street, Conway Twitty, Hank Williams, Mac Wiseman and Faron Young.

Greats and near-greats — but, all part of country music — have appeared on the stage of the Grand Ole Opry. Some started in the small studio where 25 was a big big crowd and some made their first appearance on the 110 foot stage in front of the 4,400 plus audience at the new Opry House at Opryland, U.S.A.

But they all had one thing in common no matter what his style. Their music came from the depths of their souls and touched the hearts of those who listened.

Today, country music radio stations in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles still carry the message of hope and heartbreak to millions of city dwellers.

But, the music itself dwells in the soul of the father with calloused hands and the too-small suit coat who drove his brood 150 miles to Nashville in the cramped cab of a pickup truck.

To him the Opry is more than a show, country music is more than picking and singing, and Nashville is more than just another city.

It is a rhinestone Camelot where even plain folks are welcome because Nashville belongs to them.



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